



Protein shake-up

Sodexo steps up to the plate with
“reduced meat” school meals

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Industry's sugar stance is hard to swallow

LAST ISSUE all the talk was about cheat devices hidden in VW cars. That hasn't gone away, but recently I spent three days at Food Matters Live hearing about another covert operation – hidden sugars.

You might have seen the odd press article of late lambasting the new anti-ambrosia. This is all building to the government's childhood obesity strategy in the new year. Campaigners want a sugar tax, wider bans on advertising junk food to children and faster reformulation. Industry would rather the industry-led, voluntary approach trundles on.

The very first panel set the scene:

- Ian Wright, the head of the Food and Drink Federation, in defensive mode: "It would have been nice if the NHS and public health authorities had been doing more [to tackle obesity] over the last 15 years."
- The British Hospitality Association's chief executive, Ufi Ibrahim, pushing (maybe less forcefully than some of her members would have liked) for a continuation of the Public Health Responsibility Deal: "Lots of companies have invested a lot of money [in their commitments to the deal]. We want to see that investment continue."

The deal is obviously fizzling out. "We're not sure where the responsibility deal is at this time," was the take of the Sodexo brand director, Phil Hooper, a long-time advocate of the initiative. Ibrahim suggested that access to the Department of Health had become increasingly difficult. Could the government be working on something the industry might not like?

"Companies are happy to carry on sugar-coating the results of the carrot approach"

Dr Gina Radford, the deputy chief medical officer, gave little away in terms of the nuts and bolts of the strategy, but did hint that the current approach isn't working. Her line appeared to be that not enough companies have signed up to the responsibility deal, and those that have often select the easy options (as we have reported in the past). The health secretary, Jeremy Hunt, in spite of his reported delaying of a recent advisory report on sugar, has also suggested a more "draconian" approach is needed.

Industry is clearly concerned that Hunt is ready to pick up the stick – the FDF is reportedly pre-empting any changes to advertising rules with its own voluntary bans. However, it might be too little too late. The odds of eating healthily are "stacked against" children, Radford said.

Regulation does not equal taxation, of course. Support for a sugar tax has ballooned in recent months, with Jamie Oliver at the head of the queue. He's already slapped a charge on soft drinks in his restaurants but I can't see that many have yet followed his lead. This belies the reluctance of the sector to take action (Radford's chief criticism), as companies carry on sugar-coating the results of the carrot approach.



David Burrows is editor of *Footprint* magazine

The bottom line is that through the responsibility deal not enough companies have taken responsibility for the impact they have on public health. I'm not saying solving obesity and improving public health is all about sugar, or even all about junk food and fizzy drinks, but when you hear the likes of the FDF suggesting it's all the fault of the government and consumers it provides a taste of what makes this industry tick. And it's a bitter one.

News review

Chucked chicken, meat cuts and Indonesia in flames

Finger-licking faux pas



Reading the KFC website it appears that the Colonel has got this food waste issue licked. Products are withdrawn from sale after 60 to 90 minutes, leaving about three tonnes of chicken to deal with per year in each of its 850 stores. But fear not: “At KFC, we donate our unsold chicken to local charities through our Food Donation Programme. This enables us to help local charities provide meals to those in need within the communities where our restaurants are situated. It also ensures that as little of our chicken as possible ends up as food waste.”

Problem solved, right? Wrong. As exposed in Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall’s BBC1 series “War on Waste”, this scheme is only a pilot in six outlets – that’s under 1%. KFC’s head of environment, Janet Cox, said there’s a target to roll it out to half the stores by the end of 2016. She also committed to update the website accordingly.

Since the BBC programme [there is more information](#) at KFC.co.uk, with “70 restaurants” redistributing chicken by the end of this year and 100% by 2020. But the first statement visitors still see is the one above. Lessons not quite learned, it seems. And the real poke in the eye for KFC is that Cox handled it all magnificently and the scheme is one that could have garnered plenty of positive coverage.

Three cheers for Chatham



Congratulations to researchers at think-tank Chatham House and the Glasgow University Media Group who have managed to write 76 pages on sustainable diets without one mention of insects. Seriously, “Changing Climate, Changing Diets: Pathways to Lower Meat Consumption” is an excellent appraisal of where we are: consumers’ understanding of the relationship between meat consumption and climate change is low (relative to that for comparable sources of emissions), while “governments are the only actors with the necessary resources and capacities to redirect diets at scale towards more sustainable, plant-based sources of protein”.

Extensive polls and in-depth focus groups led the research team to conclude that “soft” interventions to nudge behaviour will be well-received, but perhaps not effective enough. So if the carrot doesn’t work, do policymakers need to pick up the stick to encourage the public to eat more, er, carrots? A carbon tax, or the reduction of subsidies for livestock farming, will both push the price of meat up – this might have the powerful farming lobbies up in arms, but while consumers won’t embrace the concept whole-heartedly, it wouldn’t take long for them to come round, said author Laura Wellesley.

Politicians have long been reluctant to interfere in lifestyle choices for fear of public backlash, but these are exaggerated, she said. “Even unpopular interventions to make meat more expensive, for example through a carbon tax, would face diminishing resistance as [people] come to understand the rationale behind intervention.”

Palm oil pain



Indonesia is on fire, or at least its forests and peatlands are, as land is cleared to grow palm oil – the lucrative crop that the fast-moving consumer goods industry so heavily relies upon. George Monbiot recently described it as the “[greatest environmental disaster of the 21st century \(so far\)](#)”. But how could this happen? Isn’t there a global supply chain assurance scheme to ensure that the palm oil sourced by the food industry is sustainable?

Global Forest Watch data shows that only 105 of 3,356 palm oil concessions with fire alerts have been certified by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). But the scheme is coming under intense pressure to up its game.

Last month it announced a new addendum to its criteria, covering the claims of “no deforestation, no peat planting and strengthened human rights commitments” as part of the [Palm Oil Next](#) scheme. This is unlikely to be enough to appease the initiative’s critics, who are growing in number. A study by the Environmental Investigation Agency and Grassroots found that the auditing system supposed to protect the environment, growers and the buyers is “dodgy”.

Industry action on palm oil procurement is diverse, with some moving fast and others more sluggishly. With the RSPO in the news for all the wrong reasons, the risk is that firms will stand still and wait. And all the while Indonesia continues to burn.

The tipping point

Why restaurants are pushing for more regulation on how they handle employees' tips.
By David Burrows.



IT'S NOT often that a business sector will push for red tape, but that's exactly what the British Hospitality Association is doing. The BHA wants a new law to ensure restaurants and hotels provide clearer information on tips and service charges. Its deputy chief executive has also admitted that the voluntary code isn't working, with companies hiding their policies on websites.

The voluntary code to disclose tipping and service charges has been in place since 2009. But while the BHA, which represents 40,000 establishments, claimed that "many" of its members have signed up, a figure was not available. Whether the BHA is calling for mandatory rules because its code has been poorly received is therefore hard to say.

More likely it could be that many were being backward in coming forward. The association's deputy chief executive, Martin Couchman, speaking at Food Matters Live in November, said the companies that have been challenged publicly were abiding by the code but the disclosures were often "hidden" on their websites.

The BHA wants restaurants to disclose the following, by law:

- Whether an amount is deducted for handling costs (and how much).
- How the remainder is shared between the restaurant and the employees.
- The broad process for distribution – for example, that they are shared between the employees in the restaurant through a system controlled by a representative of the employees.

Ufi Ibrahim, the BHA's chief executive, said recently: "Although restaurants are legally entitled to deduct administration costs from service charges, for example, we think it's important customers understand exactly how much is deducted and why."

That the government is taking an interest is hardly surprising. What it doesn't want is the public backlash to result in all tips being paid in cash – money that HM Revenue and Customs has very little chance of seeing

The proposals have now been submitted to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. The business secretary, Sajid Javid, is sifting through them alongside other evidence as part of an investigation to determine whether the ministry needs to intervene. "When a diner leaves a tip, they rightly expect it to go to staff. In full. I'm concerned about recent reports suggesting some restaurants pocket tips for themselves. That's just not right," Javid said.

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In recent months, campaigners for workers' rights have shone the spotlight on some legally sound but ethically questionable practices. Service charges usually go into a "tronc", which is distributed among waiters, front of house and the kitchen team, allocated according to arrangements agreed by the staff.

However, some major high-street chains take a chunk of staff tips as an admin fee for running the system. This can be up to 10% of the tip, according to some reports. What's more, a service charge may be added which never finds its way to staff, while some waiters and waitresses are made to pay back up to 5% of their sales even if they made no tips at all.

While the latter is likely illegal under the National Minimum Wage Act, there is nothing to stop companies taking a cut from tips. The government's code of best practice on tips, first published in 2009, has the following example: "For every £1 received in card tips, the staff keep 70p, 10p covers business costs and administration and 20p goes to the business [this includes deductions for breakages, till shortages and walk-outs.] All cash tips go to staff."

Pizza Express has already ditched its 8% charge after pressure from campaigners and the media. Its chief executive, Richard Hodgson, said: "We have always been, and will continue to be, transparent about our tipping policies. We also agree with calls for greater clarity across the industry in order to ensure that staff are given a fair deal, and to enable customers to make an informed choice when it comes to tipping."

Vanessa Rapier, the chief marketing officer of the Restaurant Group, recently told the BBC that "the industry would really benefit from some clarity around tipping policies" but banning them wouldn't work because tips provide an incentive to staff.

In the US there's the start of a movement to discourage tipping, however. The Hospitality Included project at the Modern, a New York fine-dining restaurant, will see the gratuity line removed and menu prices rise instead. Food could cost 15% to 21% more, according to some reports, with staff pay increasing.

The benefit is that employees receive a higher basic wage, which is steady from month to month. The counter-argument is that they end up with less overall if the establishment is frequented by keen tippers (similar moves have also been at high-end establishments). With Rapier's comments in mind, is there also the chance that service levels will fall if there's no fiscal incentive?

Could a sugar tax be on the cards?

The childhood obesity strategy: what can be inferred from three days of debates, seminars and presentations during Food Matters Live?



Regulation rather than responsibility deal

THE GOVERNMENT’S deputy chief medical officer doesn’t think the voluntary agreements with industry are working. Dr Gina Radford noted the achievements of some companies but said that others have not come up to the mark under the Public Health Responsibility Deal. The odds of eating healthily remain “stacked against” children, which meant the new strategy (slated for the new year) will be “challenging”, she said. Her comments followed similar hints in October by the health secretary, Jeremy Hunt, who said a more “draconian” approach may be required to tackle childhood obesity.

Industry an outsider

RADFORD’S COMMENTS came during a panel session with Ufi Ibrahim, the chief executive of the British Hospitality Association, and Ian Wright, the Food and Drink Federation’s director general. Currently, there is clearly no love lost between the government and the food industry it has long been so cosy with. Ibrahim suggested there was a “fortification” around the Department of Health and it’s clear that industry doesn’t know what the DoH is up to. Could the chancellor spring another surprise like the “living wage” and sign off a sugar tax?

Targets not taxes

Regulation could, of course, mean mandatory targets rather than taxes. There’s nothing to stop more restaurants and caterers adding their own levy to sugary drinks, as the Jamie Oliver chain has done. With so few having embraced anything but the more straightforward elements of the responsibility deal, this remains unlikely. The government may therefore try a halfway house, setting mandatory targets for reformulation and portion sizes.



Power game. The government says the odds of eating healthily are ‘stacked against’ children

Money for old rope

Financially this approach would appear to make sense for government and industry. Both appear to agree that there’s no point ripping everything up and starting again. Ibrahim said she may well set about totting up how much it has cost members to implement their commitments to the responsibility deal. That shouldn’t be too hard (and it’s surprising neither the FDF or BHA have done so yet). What may be much more difficult to determine – but absolutely critical in defending the deal – is what impact this has had on the choices consumers make.

Details, details

Industry bodies are clearly desperate to keep the responsibility deal, or at least voluntary agreements, in the mix. However, they lack any data to back their arguments up. The British Soft Drinks Association claims advertising spending on low- and no-calorie drinks has increased 50% in the past year, but won’t provide a figure, let alone an idea of what proportion of total spending on soft drinks is. Campaigners, on the hand, come armed with data and one day the government is going to start listening – especially when it’s combined with public pressure.

Fishy goings on in foodservice

Mislabelling of supermarket fish has fallen dramatically thanks to regulation, media pressure and industry collaboration. The news is less positive for catering.



MISLABELLING OF SEAFOOD in supermarkets has been cut to levels that might be expected through human error alone. A team of researchers from across the EU carried out DNA testing on 1,563 samples across nine of the most popular species of fish and found only 77 (4.93%) had been mislabelled. This mirrors the findings of less expansive research in the UK and France last year. “It’s very positive news,” said the lead researcher, Professor Stefano Mariani, from the Ecosystems and Environment Research Centre at the University of Salford.

Indeed, not so long ago the figures were 10%, 20% or even 25%, prompting widespread media coverage. The EU was forced to take a look, and in January last year the regulations were updated and [new labelling requirements](#) on seafood products were introduced.

Suppliers now have to include the fish’s scientific name, the gear used to catch it and in certain cases the specific zone where it was caught. Retailers and large caterers are also encouraged to display voluntary information, such as the date of catch, the port of landing or the fishing gear used, as well as information of an environmental, ethical or social nature. This means there is no more ambiguity when it comes to naming what’s inside the tin or packet.

The role of the media in all this should not be underestimated, Mariani explained. “It prompted operators to get their act together.” A short-term study he carried out in 2014 suggested that “media coverage may have a beneficial effect on the seafood retail sector, by placing pressure on the large market players to eradicate inefficient and illegal practices”.

Mariani said the combination of “exhaustive” new labelling requirements, media pressure and industry action have all played a part in turning the tide on fish fraud in the retail sector. His latest findings, published in the journal *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, show that “rapid, positive changes in the seafood supply chain are possible”.

And the UK has led the way (see table), with only France showing low levels of mislabelling. However, in all six countries the improvements have been impressive, Mariani and his counterparts concluded. “Perhaps for the first time since the repercussions of seafood mislabeling studies started to influence the fields of fisheries, environmental conservation, and food science, we document a clear and substantial improvement in EU seafood retail sector operations,” they wrote.

UK leading the way. Researchers found just 3.25% (21) of the 647 samples they tested in the UK had been labelled incorrectly.

	Cod	Tuna	Haddock	Monkfish	Other*	Total	Mislabeled
Cardiff	35	42	33	12	5	127	6
Glasgow	30	38	33	12	7	120	2
Manchester	40	40	41	20	121	262	10
Plymouth	41	36	40	21	0	138	3
Total	146	156	147	65	133	647	21

* Sole, plaice and swordfish

But the news is not so good for foodservice, Mariani warned: as-yet-unpublished data suggests that mislabelling is likely to be higher in that sector. His [2014 study](#) showed that while the retail sector had upped its game after a media backlash, mislabelling in takeaways, for example, remained unchanged.

“We had the opportunity to re-sample exactly the same shops and stores that we found to be [mislabelling] in 2009,” he explained. “All the fish and chip shops remained the same and all the supermarkets had completely cleaned up their acts.”

Mariani said that action had been slower, in part, because consumers have a more “cavalier” attitude when they eat out. For criminals the “ground is fertile”, he said, given how detached people have become from the fish they eat: generally, “consumers think there are only six or seven species to eat”.

In October, Professor Chris Elliott explained how retailers are squeezing criminals out of their supply chains following, most notably, the horse-meat scandal. This could see them popping up in foodservice. “My real fear is that the pressure points have changed and criminals are targeting SMEs [small to medium-sized enterprises] and foodservice,” he warned in an interview with *Footprint*.

December's magazine in numbers

0 – number of all-male boards in FTSE100



Lord Davies has published his report on how women's representation on the boards of the FTSE 100 has changed since 2010. In 2011, women made up 12.5% of board members; today it's 25%, with Davies calling for a target for FTSE 350 firms of 33% by 2020. Worth noting that the figures are for positions held by women, not individuals, so women who serve on more than one board would have been counted more than once.

0.5 – tonnes less meat used by Sodexo



The company has “shaved” meat from 10 of its popular meals in eight independent schools, replacing it with plants, pulses and fruit. In three weeks the chefs have used half a tonne less meat. Carbon savings could also be in the region of 10% to 15%.

2 – number of years to find ugly veg



The upmarket catering firm Vacherin has finally found a supplier of ugly fruit and veg. This follows a two-year search, but it's worth it given that it's 20% cheaper for the chefs and there's no discernable difference in quality.

30% – cuts DEFRA has agreed with the chancellor



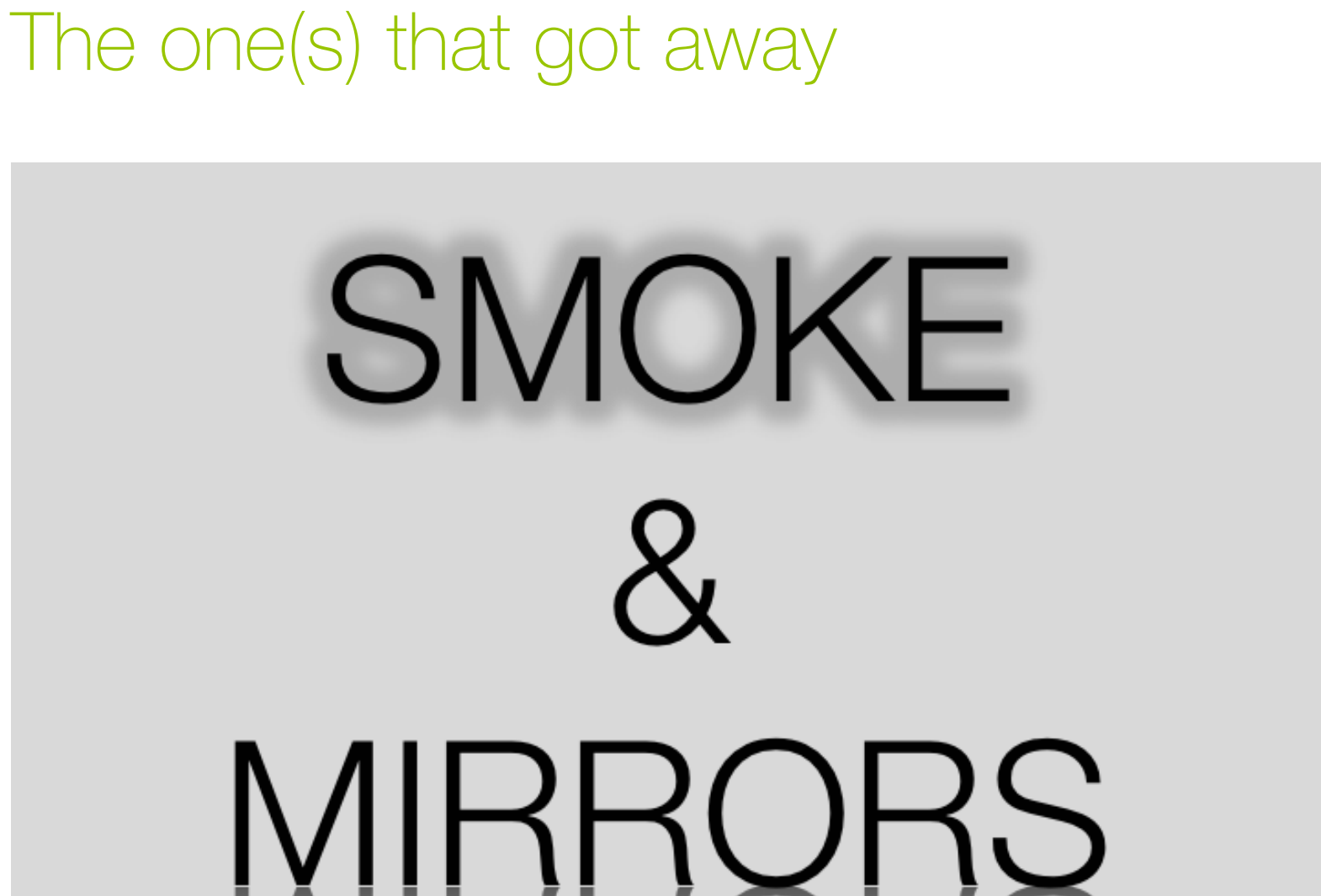
DEFRA could shrink to nothing more than a firefighting – or rather flood-fighting – department by 2020. The department has agreed severe cuts to its budget with the Treasury. A recent survey also found that only 31% of civil servants at Nobel House feel the department is being well-managed.

11,000 – plastic particles eaten by the ‘average’ seafood consumer



Fish and shellfish eat tiny plastic particles floating around in the sea. Then we eat the fish. Is this a human health threat? Probably not, according to our briefing. The 11,000 figure (from a study in Belgium) is also unlikely, we were told: “You’d have to eat 22,000 mussels a year.” That doesn’t mean marine litter isn’t an environmental threat currently or a food safety issue in the future, though.

The one(s) that got away



Actually, there were two. The British Hospitality Association said “many” of its members had signed up to its voluntary code of practice on tipping, but couldn’t offer up a figure. The British Soft Drinks Association is equally vague when it comes to its claim that advertising spending on low- and no-calorie drinks has increased 50% in the past year – *Footprint* would like to know from what to what and, even better, how those figures compare to advertising as a whole. Please?

Behind the headlines

UK swims against the green tide



The signs are good for a global deal on climate change in Paris but new regulations are a long way down the Conservatives' agenda.



BY THE TIME you read this there may already be a global deal on climate change in place. The COP21 talks end on December 11th, and the odds that an agreement will be struck are pretty decent.

Copenhagen five years ago may have been a disaster, but this time around there is an air of positivity for the Paris talks – despite the terrorist attacks in the city in November. Some observers, including the US president, suggest the attacks could galvanise greater solidarity and urgency.

Much has been done to pave the way for a legally binding agreement that will focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions after 2020, as well as the investment required to ensure developing countries can adapt to the changes that have already been set in motion during decades of fossil fuel addiction.

Countries have submitted their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) showing how far and deep their own cuts will be. It's no secret that these are nowhere near enough to keep temperatures within that 2°C tipping point, but this is no reason to be defeatist.

The critics and alarmists miss the point, wrote David Victor, a professor of international relations at the University of California, in a recent issue of *New Scientist*. “The Paris pledges already put the world on track for a lot less warming than some feared a few years ago. And governments in richer countries are on track to honour a commitment to free up, by 2020, about \$100 billion per year to help the poorest countries.”

He went on: “Deep greens will call Paris a failure. But it could do more to establish practical mechanisms for co-operation than any other deal since the early 1990s. It would, of course, have been better for this to have happened long ago. But better late than never.”

The INDCs will keep rises to about 2.7°C rather than four or five if business continued as usual. Even the hardened sceptics of the past think that kind of deal would be a monumental achievement. Talking to the *Independent* in November, Jonathon Porritt noted that the shift in political will was already ebbing across into the psyche of the investment community.

“Investors carried on putting shedloads of money into fossil fuels because they did not believe that governments would really act to deal with climate change” through strict curbs on fossil fuel use, he said.

“That pretext for inaction has simply disappeared – it is a complete line in the sand. Now no investor can honestly say ‘we clocked theoretically that climate change was on the horizon, but we never thought politicians would do anything about it’. That’s of huge importance to investment flows over the next 10 years.”

With this in mind, it's also positive to see corporate leaders more vocal (perhaps, even, than politicians) in the run-up to COP21, with a number of commitments agreed by various coalitions. This industry leadership is critical given the current political climate in the UK.

As the world signs up to take charge of climate change, the Conservative government appears willing to pull the plug on renewable energy. The spending review has hit DECC and DEFRA hard and, given their recent pronouncements, neither Amber Rudd nor Elizabeth Truss – the respective heads of each department – have placed much emphasis on the carbon agenda. The chancellor even less so.

Since the elections the energy policy choices made in Whitehall are likely to increase emissions in the UK, according to an analysis by the BBC. The broadcaster's assessment is far from conclusive, said Adrian Gault, the chief economist for independent government advisory body the Committee on Climate Change, but the impact in terms of carbon dioxide is hard to quantify precisely. “Probably the bigger impact will come from the large amount of policy uncertainty which will lead to reduction in low-carbon development. Industry is very, very unhappy about the uncertainty that's been created.”

Large numbers of businesses – especially small and medium enterprises – are now wondering whether renewables are the no-brainer they were before the election. A new subsidy regime is expected in the new year but proposals suggest massive cuts for technologies such as solar, which the Conservatives believe is big enough to stand on its own two feet.

But if the sums don't add up then there is plenty more to do in terms of energy efficiency. Catering companies still waste vast amounts in kitchens, for example, and if manufacturers can provide accurate data on returns on investment for “greener” warewashers and the like then carbon reduction becomes an aside to bettering the business's bottom line.

Of course, the emissions inside a company's four walls are only part of the problem. Sitting through a number of sessions on “sustainable food systems” at Food Matters Live recently it was clear that many companies are still struggling to account for their impact up and down the supply chain – the emissions created by the food they sell, for instance.

Accounting for this is fiercely complicated at a global level – COP21's deal has focused on product-based reporting rather than consumption-based metrics – or even a national level. But it's becoming a reality at company level.

Sodexo, for example, is developing a tool with the help of WWF to determine the carbon and water savings from its new “Green & Lean” menus. There is no political pressure for it to pilot the scheme, in which meat has been shaved off a number of the most popular school meals, but there are social, environmental and perhaps commercial benefits in doing so. This is business taking responsibility despite, not because of, regulation.

Whatever the outcome of COP21 there is unlikely to be a huge shift in regulation at UK level to curb carbon emissions. Defined rules will always make a game easier, but the ball – as the government undoubtedly desires – is in the court of business. Game on.

Political Print

An open letter to the Labour Party

Dear Labour,

Long time no speak.

First, you must forgive us for spending several of these columns since the election dissecting the Conservative Party's policies. We hope you'll understand – they are in government, after all.

Moreover, there's been so much to discuss with relevance to the foodservice sector: the national living wage – still a sore point? – and cuts to tax credits will have a major impact on an industry in which a significant proportion of the workforce is paid the minimum wage.

The Tories' food and farming strategy – built on producing more, buying more and exporting more British food – is audacious and ambitious (and some might say a little parochial), while an environment strategy built on ... erm, we'll get back to you on that one.

But what about you guys?

We notice you have embraced the "opposition" element of your role with vigour, although opposing your own leader doesn't really count, does it? There's a government to be held to account and we'd all like to hear a bit more about your plans where our sector is concerned.

We have been casting our eyes over your economic policy (FYI – we're reading from John McDonnell's November 2015 Eco Pol (v18).doc). You want a higher-wage economy, but whereas the Conservatives will pay for it by cutting public spending and outsourcing Britain to the Chinese, you will balance the books by raising taxes on corporations and high-wealth individuals, while investing in national infrastructure to stimulate demand. Which is fine – we're not about taking sides.

And what about food? Before the election your shadow DEFRA team was confidently preparing for government by readying the relaunch of a national food strategy which revived your old Food 2030 plan in everything but name. Sorry that didn't work out.

So what's the new plan?

We note the appointment of Kerry McCarthy as shadow environment secretary. Apparently she's a vegan ... who knew? But rest assured that as a respectable magazine we won't be tittering in the corner over her proclamations on farting cows like our friends at the *Sun*, as we know she was making a substantive point about the environmental impact of livestock production.

We also applaud her for not taking the *Daily Mail*'s bait after it reported she apparently believes in treating meat eaters like smokers, although she must have enjoyed the WHO's recent classification of processed meat as carcinogenic to humans.

There's also some extremely sensible, if not entirely original, ideas in her Food Waste (Reduction) Bill (voluntary agreements aren't working and it's certainly been too easy for supermarkets to push waste responsibility up or downstream). We only hope it doesn't get buried like your landfill ban plan.

We would like – please – to see a few more concrete policies. As your esteemed leader, Jeremy Corbyn, knows only too well, often the characterisation of public figures is more important than the reality. As such we urge Ms McCarthy to outline a set of credible priorities and objectives as soon as possible or risk spending the remainder of the parliament being chased around Portcullis House Benny Hill-style by a *Daily Mail* reporter riding a cow while eating a bacon sandwich (what a mess that would be).

We note her passion for environmental sustainability and encourage her to persist with highlighting the link between food and the environment. Not least because the current government appears to view these as two entirely separate: its 25-year food and farming plan will be independent of its 25-year environment plan despite the former patently relying on the success of the latter.

The majority of food businesses are well aware of their reliance on natural capital – such as fertile soils and secure water supplies – to support their business models. By effectively decoupling the two, the Conservatives risk being out of kilter with all but the most short-termist organisations. You can borrow this line if you like.

I guess what we're saying is that current government policy as it relates to our sector is game-changing and, whisper it quietly, actually quite radical. Regardless of whether you believe it's right or wrong (and we're guessing you believe it's the latter) the country needs an effective opposition to scrutinise and challenge the ruling party. That means you, in case you were wondering.

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

The Political Print

My viewpoint

Britain's boardrooms need more women but the foodservice sector is well ahead on gender equality. By Caroline Fry.

“

I WAS INTERESTED to read the recent Lord Davies recommendations about ensuring that the boards of FTSE 350 companies are at least one-third women by 2020. It got me thinking about the past 24 years I've spent with CH&Co and what things have changed in that time.

The simple answer is lots, but not when it comes to women in leadership. We have always been in the fortunate position that women have played a big part in developing our business, and I think we're all the stronger for this gender balance. Within my company, women now occupy the key roles of chief finance officer, finance director, human resources director and deputy CEO, so we all have power and influence on the strategy and direction of the business.

While I'm pleased to see the likes of Lord Davies championing the value of women in business and promoting increased gender equality, I think foodservice is well ahead of most industries. This sector already enjoys a good gender balance with many women setting up and leading their own successful foodservice companies. Some of the largest companies in our sector are currently or have been run by women. There are also many female role models, but of course there is always room for more.

I think people should be judged fairly on merit. I made my way up the ladder by working hard and delivering on my promises within a supportive company where this was recognised and rewarded. Not all women are so lucky. Juggling career and family remains one of the largest challenges women in business face and sadly many women still feel that they have to choose between the two.

But why? It's as big a loss for business as it is for the women in question; who has better time management skills than a busy working mum? The Benjamin Franklin quotation comes to mind: "If you want something done ask a busy person."

There is real value in having women at the upper levels of business, including on boards. A recent study by Grant Thornton, "Women in Business: The Value of Diversity", showed that publicly traded companies in which only men hold executive director level positions missed out on £430 billion in investment returns over the past year. In my experience, men and women often bring different perspectives to analysis, problem solving and decision making so it stands to reason that a good gender balance can achieve greater results.



My advice for any woman in her career is simple: stay true to your principles, no matter what, and always treat people with respect. The UK has an impressive number of talented women, and I hope we continue to see these talents rewarded and businesses reaping the benefits. ”

Caroline Fry is deputy CEO of the CH&Co Group



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✓ Biodegradable
Detergents
✓ Improved MPG
✓ Green Earth
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My viewpoint

Britain's boardrooms need more women but the foodservice sector is well ahead on gender equality. By Caroline Fry.

“

I WAS INTERESTED to read the recent Lord Davies recommendations about ensuring that the boards of FTSE 350 companies are at least one-third women by 2020. It got me thinking about the past 24 years I've spent with CH&Co and what things have changed in that time.

The simple answer is lots, but not when it comes to women in leadership. We have always been in the fortunate position that women have played a big part in developing our business, and I think we're all the stronger for this gender balance. Within my company, women now occupy the key roles of chief finance officer, finance director, human resources director and deputy CEO, so we all have power and influence on the strategy and direction of the business.

While I'm pleased to see the likes of Lord Davies championing the value of women in business and promoting increased gender equality, I think foodservice is well ahead of most industries. This sector already enjoys a good gender balance with many women setting up and leading their own successful foodservice companies. Some of the largest companies in our sector are currently or have been run by women. There are also many female role models, but of course there is always room for more.

I think people should be judged fairly on merit. I made my way up the ladder by working hard and delivering on my promises within a supportive company where this was recognised and rewarded. Not all women are so lucky. Juggling career and family remains one of the largest challenges women in business face and sadly many women still feel that they have to choose between the two.

But why? It's as big a loss for business as it is for the women in question; who has better time management skills than a busy working mum? The Benjamin Franklin quotation comes to mind: "If you want something done ask a busy person."



There is real value in having women at the upper levels of business, including on boards. A recent study by Grant Thornton, "Women in Business: The Value of Diversity", showed that publicly traded companies in which only men hold executive director level positions missed out on £430 billion in investment returns over the past year. In my experience, men and women often bring different perspectives to analysis, problem solving and decision making so it stands to reason that a good gender balance can achieve greater results.



My advice for any woman in her career is simple: stay true to your principles, no matter what, and always treat people with respect. The UK has an impressive number of talented women, and I hope we continue to see these talents rewarded and businesses reaping the benefits. ”

Caroline Fry is deputy CEO of the CH&Co Group



A lean green leap forward

Livestock is a major cause of global warming but with governments reluctant to make unpopular moves to cut meat consumption, Sodexo is leading the way. By David Burrows.



WHATEVER DEAL is struck in Paris in December, it's unlikely to be enough to keep global warming within the 2°C "safe" limit. The commitments on the table will take us about halfway there, according to those who have sifted through the hodge-podge of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions. So even before the ink is dry, attention will turn to new ways of plugging that gap.

Reducing meat consumption is an obvious one, says Laura Wellesley, a research associate at think-tank Chatham House. "Worldwide adoption of a healthy diet would generate over a quarter of the emission reductions needed by 2050." It's a compelling argument – livestock emissions are on a par with transport – but one that has been gathering momentum without ever really catching on.

Campaigns have started but soon fizzled out. Meat-free Monday was a simplistic take on a complex issue, and has been undone by its pro-vegetarianism rather than pro-planet vibe. Those speaking out about the benefits, or rather necessity, of eating less meat have been tarred with the same hippy brush. Lord Stern is a prominent example.

"I was not demanding people become vegetarians," he said after comments during an interview with the *Times* newspaper were taken out of context and picked up worldwide, "but instead suggested that they should be aware that the more meat they eat, the higher the emissions of greenhouse gases."

The connection between eating and emissions isn't something the public gets quite yet. Research published in November showed that understanding of livestock's role in climate change is very low relative to that for comparable sources of emissions. Governments have used this ignorance and antipathy as a reason not to wade in, but fears of a public backlash are often exaggerated.

Sodexo's scheme is a small step in the context of the emissions reductions 'gap' that dietary changes can help to bridge, but a giant leap for the sustainability agenda in foodservice

They "fear the repercussions of intervention, while low public awareness means they feel no pressure to intervene", Wellesley explains. Yet even unpopular interventions to make meat more expensive – for example through a carbon tax – would face diminishing resistance as people come to understand the rationale behind intervention.

Taxes – as witnessed by the sugar tax debate raging in the UK – would be a controversial approach to promoting sustainable diets. That is not to say the concept couldn't work, only that it is a long way off becoming politically acceptable and practically workable. Another idea, which could also make meat more expensive, would be to remove the subsidies for livestock farmers. Again, wishful thinking.

This leaves, at least in the short-term, the "soft" policy approaches – increasing the availability of low- or no-meat options, for example. Recent surveys have shown that people are eating less meat, and even more are thinking about doing so. Scandals like that involving horse-meat and concerns over animal welfare, as well as scare stories linking processed meats to cancer, will certainly fuel the trend.

But "while we know that there's a growing number of consumers interested in 'flexitarian' eating, there's an awful lot more where it isn't even on their radar", says Sue Dibb, the coordinator of the Eating Better initiative.

Dibb has been working to raise awareness of the business opportunities for healthy sustainable eating, identifying what better practice looks like and showcasing businesses leading the way. Sodexo recently moved to the head of the queue with Green & Lean, a pilot scheme of 10 sustainable meals.

Launched officially at Food Matters Live in November, in a session chaired by *Footprint*, the new dishes have all had their meat content "shaved". Beef lasagne with less beef, pork loin with less pork and chicken biryani with less chicken. To fill that hole, Sodexo's chefs have used a range of plants and pulses.

"We thought it would be easy," admits the company's executive development chef for independent schools, Tom Allen, "but then we started to cut [meat out] and it didn't work on taste." The pork loin was one of the trickiest. "If you reduce the pork by a third, you're: 'Where's my meat?'" Allen explains. So a stuffing was created. Other dishes have been easier to tackle, without compromising on taste, quality or nutrition.

Still, the menu has taken two years to research and develop, with each meal aligned to 10 sustainable eating principles – from sourcing certified fish and wasting as little as possible to avoiding foods high in fat, salt and sugar and, of course, ensuring that meat makes up only a third of the plate.

Eight of the meals cost the same, but in two the costs have marginally increased

Nick Hughes, WWF UK's food sustainability adviser, has been working with Sodexo throughout. He says schools are the perfect place to start the project. "We wanted to engage children around sustainable diets. That engagement is key."

And so far so good. Feedback from the eight independent schools and 14,000 pupils involved in the pilot has been extremely positive. The changes have also already saved half a tonne of meat in its first fortnight or so, says Sodexo's corporate responsibility manager for the UK and Ireland, Edwina Hughes. "Before Christmas we'll be doing focus groups with the chefs and the children."

The one fly in the ointment so far has been cost. One of the 10 principles is that the sustainable options should cost no more than their higher-meat equivalents. Eight of the meals cost the same, but in two the costs have "marginally increased", says Nick Hughes. "Although these two dishes have less meat, they now have more ingredients overall and take a bit more time to prepare. This is the kind of issue the pilot is meant to identify and is something we can rectify as we develop the offer further."

Indeed, this is just the start. Sodexo is, in the UK at least, sticking its head above the parapet with this scheme, but with buy-in at board level there is clearly a feeling that this is the way to go. Edwina Hughes is already looking at whether the pilot could be rolled out to more schools or other sectors. The concept could even be handed over to chefs for them to take control.

In due course there will also be a carbon footprint tool available to determine the emissions savings from the sustainable meals, but Nick Hughes reckons it'll be around "10% to 15%". Food waste will also be factored in at some point: whether the children are eating more of the low-carbon dishes than they did the high-carbon ones is a crucial dataset.

If Sodexo and WWF can put figures on all this – the emissions, cost (savings), waste and nutritional benefits of their new approach, others will soon start sniffing around. This would be welcome: the more case studies there are to show sustainable diets work – commercially, environmentally, socially – the less government will be able to ignore them.

"Governments are the only actors with the necessary resources and capacities to redirect diets at scale towards more sustainable, plant-based sources of protein," says Wellesley.

Changing public procurement guidelines would be an obvious place to start, but why wait for the government? Sodexo is already on the way to proving sustainable diets can be commercially viable and offer significant emissions savings without any of the Big Brother backlash many have feared. It may be a small step in the context of the emissions reduction gap that dietary changes can help to bridge, but it's a giant leap for the sustainability agenda in foodservice. Are others brave enough to come along for the ride?

Nick Hughes is also associate editor of Footprint.



Personalised nutrition

Diet advice aimed at the general population isn't doing the job. Could personally tailored recommendations based on genetic testing be the answer? By Nick Hughes.



HOW DO YOU get people to eat a healthy diet? It's a question that has flummoxed policymakers in the UK for years with no real sense that they have hit on the right approach.

Centralised information in the form of the government's Eatwell plate sets dietary guidelines at a population level, yet the majority of us fail to heed its advice – the latest data from the National Diet and Nutrition Survey suggests that we eat more than the average recommended intake of red and processed meat and are nowhere near hitting our five-a-day fruit and veg target.

But what if dietary advice were targeted at an individual level?

Welcome to the world of personalised nutrition – a fledgling but rapidly developing area of public health in which people can receive individual interventions, through an expert or dietician, based upon their unique genetic profile and associated health risks.

The subject provided a fertile topic for conversation at November's Food Matters Live event where, in a session dedicated to personalised nutrition, Dr Barbara Stewart-Knox, a professor of psychology at the University of Bradford neatly summarised its premise: "If you have this particular genetic propensity and if you do nothing then this is the possible outcome."

Through personalised nutrition interventions people found to be susceptible to heart disease, for instance, might be encouraged to consume foods containing more B-vitamins and antioxidants. Genetic assessment can also be used to highlight previously unknown intolerances or allergies, such as to lactose or gluten, or to indicate whether your caffeine consumption might be a problem based on your metabolism – insights which could affect what foods we eat.

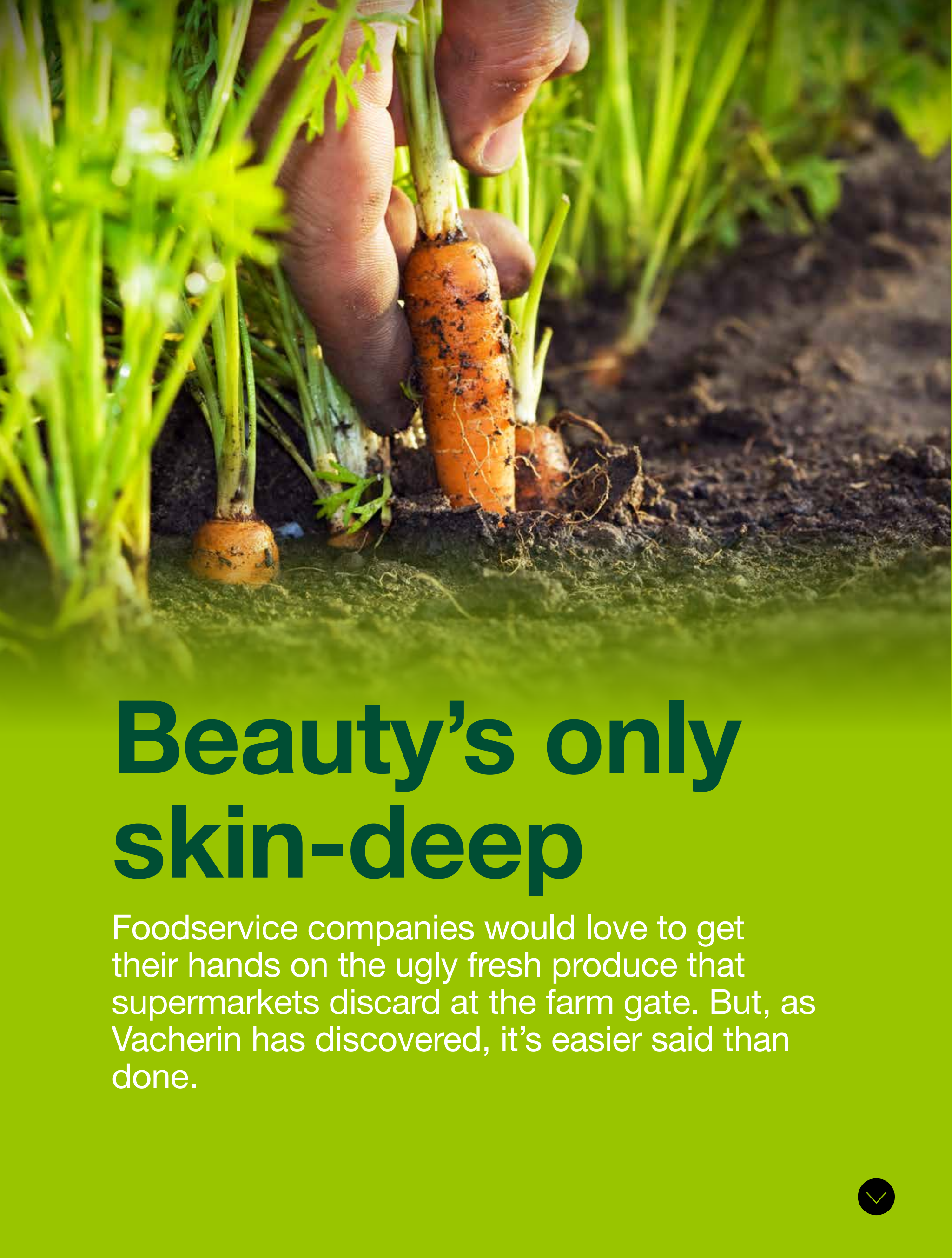
Personalised nutrition could be the magic bullet the public health community has been yearning for

The business community is already looking to grab a slice of the pie. Private companies such as the US firm 23andme have inserted themselves into the market, offering direct-to-consumer nutrigenetic testing whereby the customer's DNA is analysed via a saliva sample and they receive a genetic test report accompanied, in many cases, by personalised advice on nutrition. Such businesses are careful to stress that their reports are intended for informational purposes only and do not diagnose disease or illness, but clearly there is potential for companies to partner with food or supplements suppliers to cross-sell their products or to integrate a food offer into their own nutrigenetic testing business.

Some companies already sell genetic data to third parties with the customer's explicit consent in order for products to be targeted at individuals. While many consumers are happy to allow such information to be shared, "for some people there are serious concerns about how their data would be protected, if at all", according to Dr Sharron Kuznesof, a lecturer in food consumer research at Newcastle University.

Concerns about privacy aside, there is caution about the current strength of the evidence base for public health interventions based on genetic profiling. In response, the EU initiated the Food for Me project in 2011, which brought together an international group of experts to explore the application of individualised nutrition advice, investigate consumer attitudes and produce new scientific tools for implementation. A white paper published in May 2015 concluded that the mere fact that an individual received dietary recommendations on a personal basis was already enough to positively affect dietary behaviour; however, adding genetic information into the advice could not be shown to result in greater effectiveness at this stage.

There is evidently still a way to go in establishing the efficacy of personalised nutrition as well as a lack of clarity about its implications for the foodservice and food retail sectors. But with the obesity crisis escalating and population-level health advice patently failing, many hopes will be pinned on it becoming the magic bullet the public health community has been yearning for.



Beauty's only skin-deep

Foodservice companies would love to get their hands on the ugly fresh produce that supermarkets discard at the farm gate. But, as Vacherin has discovered, it's easier said than done.



WHO CARES what a carrot or apple looks like – it's the taste that matters. Or is it?

Supermarkets have long argued that their strict cosmetic standards are in place because it's what their customers demand. The waste left at the farm gate therefore isn't their fault – they will relentlessly promote the data showing that stores are responsible for just 1-2% of all food waste.

Morrisons tried to put this theory to the test with a small trial involving courgettes. Under pressure from Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall in his latest campaign, War on Waste, the retailer offered shoppers the choice, side by side, of class 1 and class 2 produce.

"We suspect they will reach out for the prettier ones," the company's PR boss told the celebrity chef. And they did. The class 1s sold "twice as fast" as their uglier cousins. But there was a blemish on Morrisons' trial – the two types of courgettes were sold at the same price. This rendered it pretty pointless.

There's a lot of conversation about foodservice using retail rejects, but very little practical action

The French supermarket Intermarché sold its *fruits & légumes moches* (inglorious fruit and veg) at a 30% discount and had rather different results. In Portugal, the Fruta Feia cooperative is also proving a hit with shoppers and farmers alike. Some manufacturers are already spying an opportunity in ugly here, too; Les Gueules Cassées, a firm selling deformed fresh produce, has just launched an English website under the Ugly Mugs brand.

There is certainly no shortage of supply. As the Institution of Mechanical Engineers' seminal report in 2013 suggested: "Although mature, developed societies have substantially more efficient, effective and well-engineered market logistics, 30% of what is harvested from the field never actually reaches the marketplace (primarily the supermarket) due to trimming, quality selection and failure to conform to purely cosmetic criteria."

In Fearnley-Whittingstall's series the focus fell on a parsnip producer which ended up going bust after years of throwing away 30% to 40% of the crop in what was described as an "arms race" of cosmetic standards between the supermarkets. That race to the beautiful resulted in 300 shopping trolleys of wasted parsnips every week.

New ugly product brands may well save some other farmers from going the same way, but surely there is an opportunity for foodservice companies too? In fact, isn't much of the class 2 produce ending up in commercial kitchens anyway?



Sitting pretty: Catering firm Vacherin uses ugly fresh produce in its new l'mperfect range.

"That's a myth," says Anthony Kingsley, the sustainability lead for upmarket catering firm Vacherin. There may have been "lots of conversation" but the complexities of the system mean there has been "very little practical action".

Michael Barker is the editor of the trade publication *Fresh Produce Journal*. He says it's impossible to say whether or not catering companies are snaffling large quantities of retailer-rejected produce. "There is such a lack of data on fresh produce usage that nobody ever seems to put a finger on these things."

What we do know is that something needs to change. Vacherin recently became one of the few willing to step in to tackle these "systemic issues" when it launched a new range for its chefs called l'mperfect to "champion imperfect produce". Chefs receive emails detailing the weekly availability of a range of produce that hasn't passed the cosmetic standards of retailers but is "perfectly good to eat". It's also up to 20% cheaper.

Though diners can't tell which dishes contain l'mperfect produce and which don't, the company is keen to communicate the initiative and encourage more of the sector to do the same. The foodservice industry is in a perfect place to help address this issue, says Vacherin's director of food, Dan Kelly. "We are not as constrained as retailers, seldom need the same volumes that they do, and we prepare produce before serving it to consumers. We have found that it actually saves us money."

Chefs receive emails detailing the weekly availability of a range of produce that hasn't passed the cosmetic standards of retailers but is 'perfectly good to eat'

But it hasn't been easy. Kingsley says finding the right supplier has taken two years. There can be a short window of opportunity and unknown quantities available – supermarkets still change orders overnight, regardless of the grocery code of practice and adjudicator.

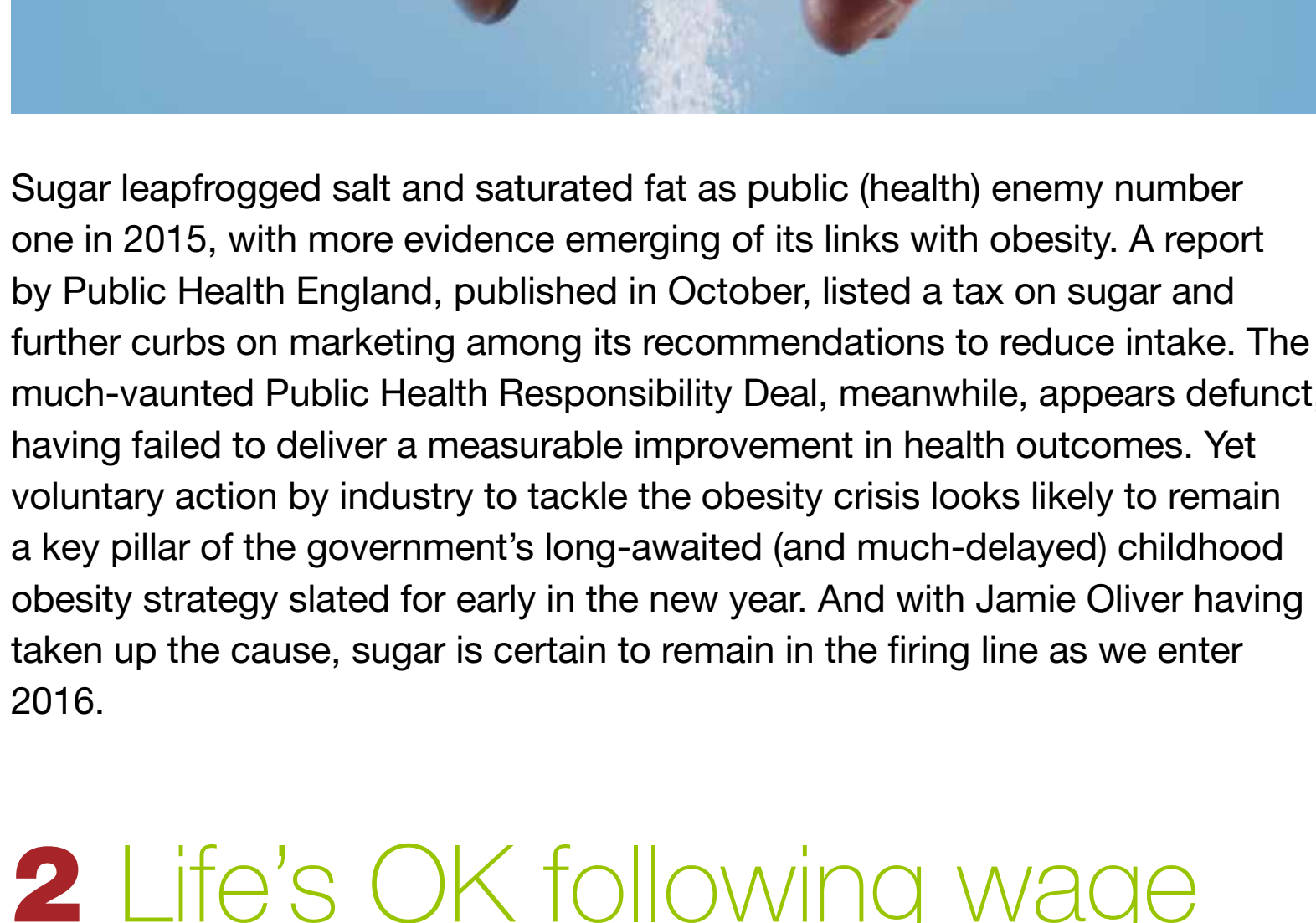
Kingsley seems keen to use the initiative to spotlight both the opportunity for caterers and the poor performance of retailers, who he believes are sidestepping their responsibilities on waste. "Small farmers get locked into contracts with large retailers because farmers are promised the purchase of entire crops, until the retailers decide cosmetic standards aren't good enough," he explains. "Then the farmers have little time and large quantities to sell, and are locked into exclusive contract deals. There is a systemic problem causing millions of tonnes of edible produce to go to waste."

As far as the diner is concerned it comes down to awareness. It's about teaching the consumer that cosmetics do not reflect the quality of the produce, he adds. Perhaps people already understand more than we think, but the supermarkets are turning a blind eye. But beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

The 10 big issues for 2016

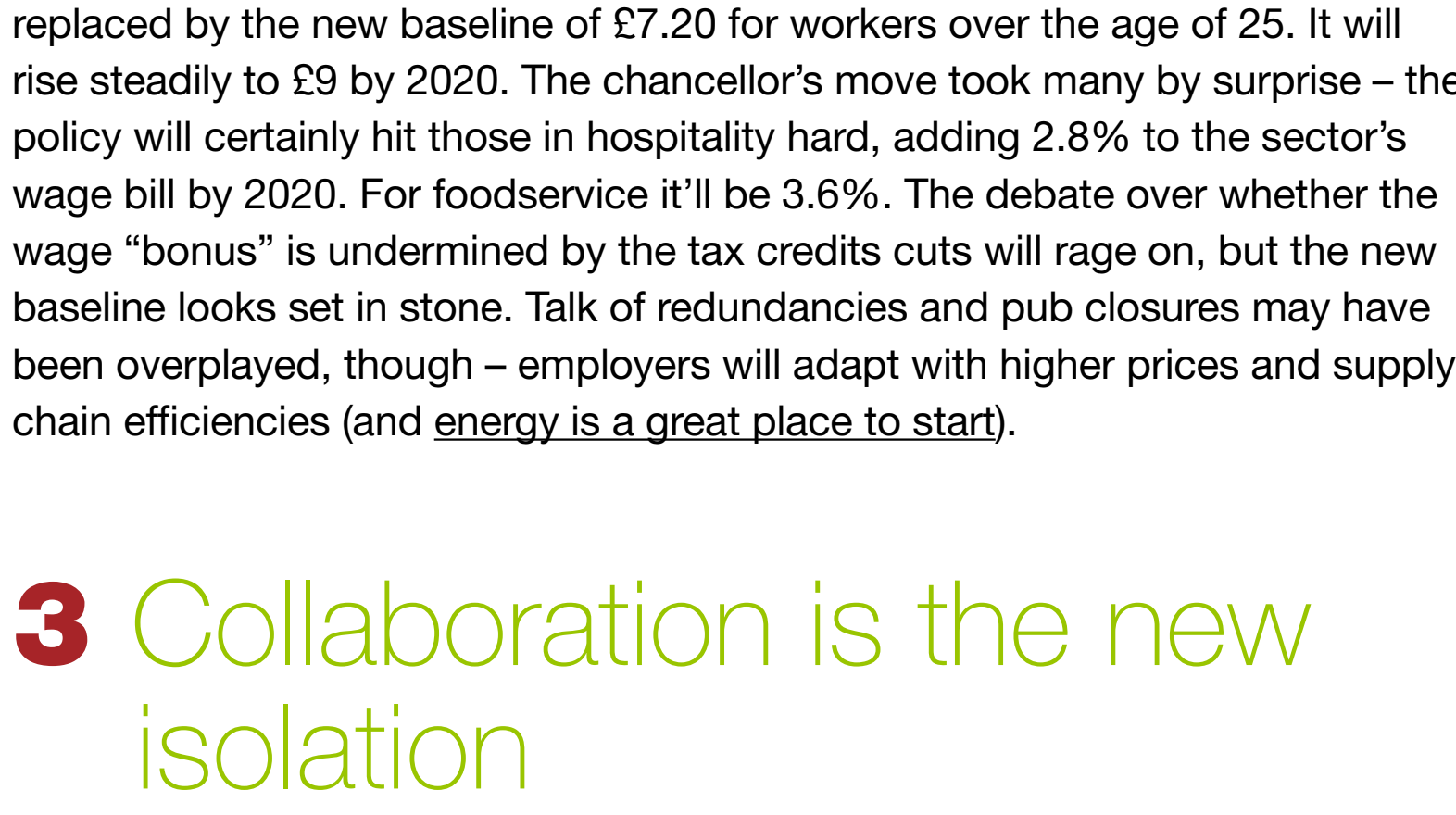
Sugar and supply chains, pay rises and publicity: the topics that'll dominate the industry's agenda in the new year.

1 Guns stay fixed on sugar



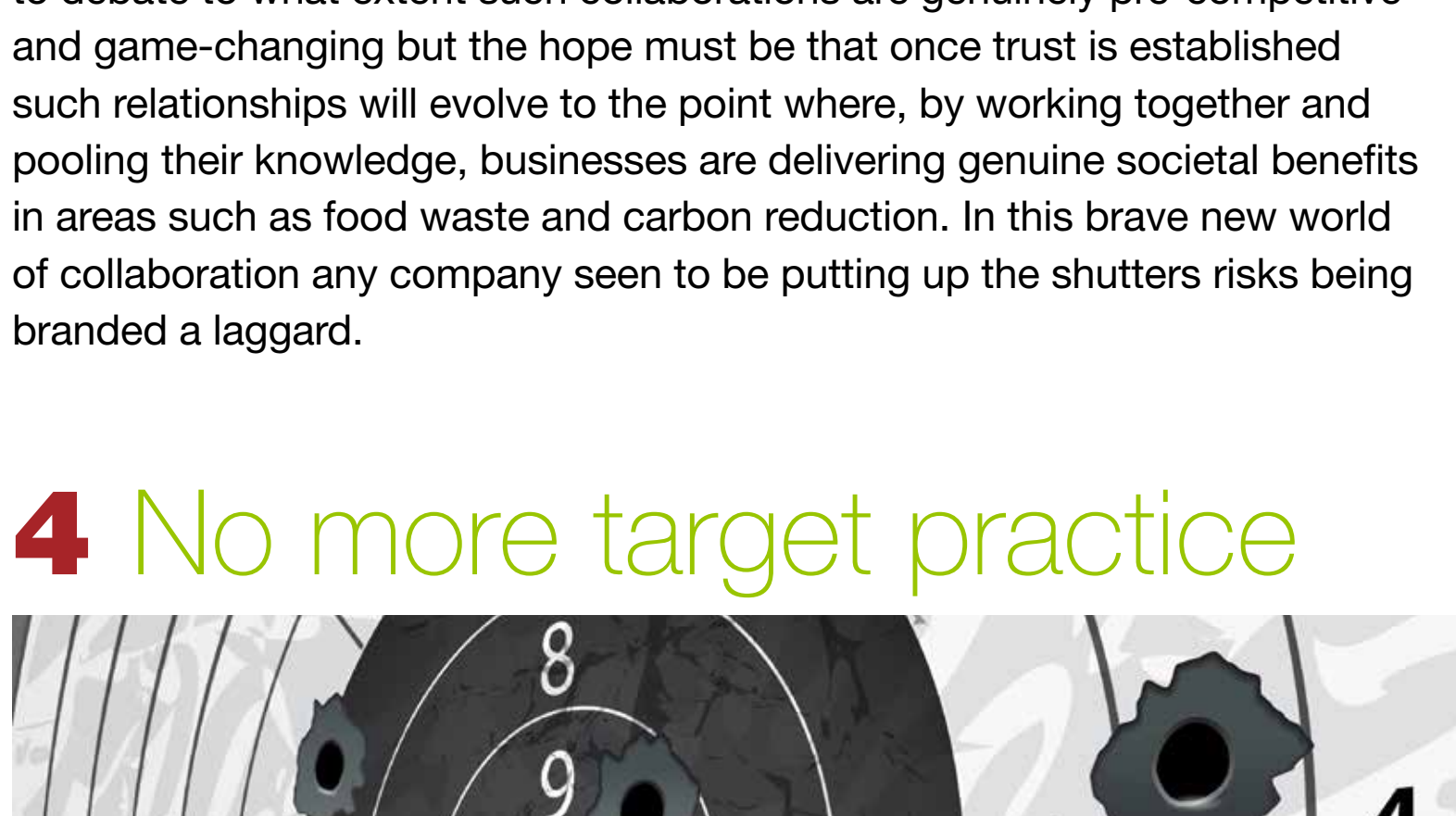
Sugar leapfrogged salt and saturated fat as public (health) enemy number one in 2015, with more evidence emerging of its links with obesity. A report by Public Health England, published in October, listed a tax on sugar and further curbs on marketing among its recommendations to reduce intake. The much-vaunted Public Health Responsibility Deal, meanwhile, appears defunct, having failed to deliver a measurable improvement in health outcomes. Yet voluntary action by industry to tackle the obesity crisis looks likely to remain a key pillar of the government's long-awaited (and much-delayed) childhood obesity strategy slated for early in the new year. And with Jamie Oliver having taken up the cause, sugar is certain to remain in the firing line as we enter 2016.

2 Life's OK following wage increases



Those hoping that the "national living wage" turns out to be an April fool will be disappointed. From the first of the month the £6.70 minimum wage will be replaced by the new baseline of £7.20 for workers over the age of 25. It will rise steadily to £9 by 2020. The chancellor's move took many by surprise – the policy will certainly hit those in hospitality hard, adding 2.8% to the sector's wage bill by 2020. For foodservice it'll be 3.6%. The debate over whether the wage "bonus" is undermined by the tax credits cuts will rage on, but the new baseline looks set in stone. Talk of redundancies and pub closures may have been overplayed, though – employers will adapt with higher prices and supply chain efficiencies (and [energy is a great place to start](#)).

3 Collaboration is the new isolation



The [International Food Waste Coalition](#); Bidvest's [Plate2Planet website](#); Alpro's [plant-based coalition](#): gone are the days when companies' attempts to solve the sustainability challenges of the era were formulated behind closed doors, shrouded in secrecy until the big reveal. Yes, it remains open to debate to what extent such collaborations are genuinely pre-competitive and game-changing but the hope must be that once trust is established such relationships will evolve to the point where, by working together and pooling their knowledge, businesses are delivering genuine societal benefits in areas such as food waste and carbon reduction. In this brave new world of collaboration any company seen to be putting up the shutters risks being branded a laggard.

4 No more target practice



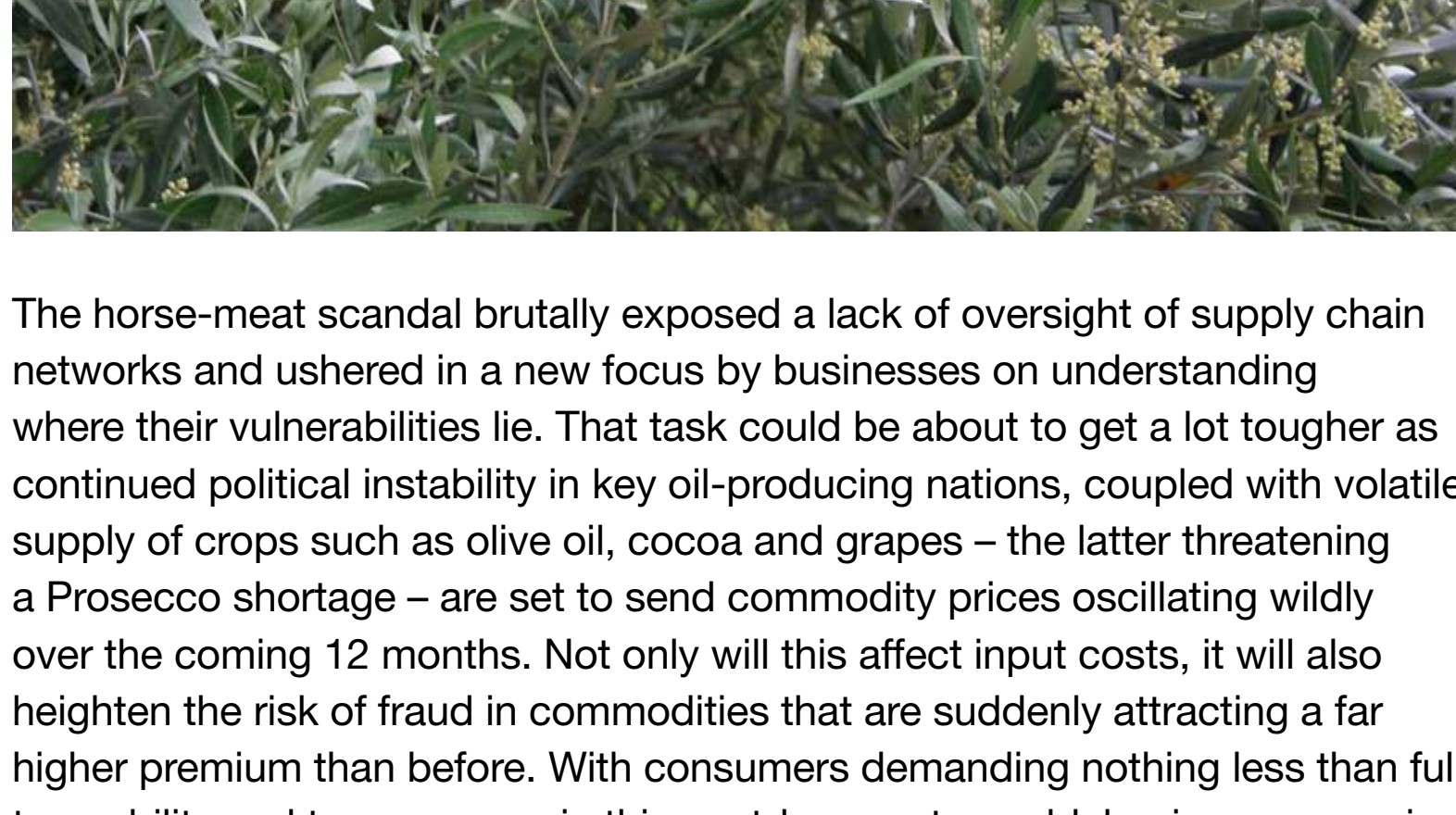
Remember a few years ago when everyone was producing sustainability plans and setting targets on everything from recycling to the procurement of sustainable palm oil? Well, a fair proportion of these are up for review in 2015. That means next year, once the data's been crunched, we'll know whether the targets have been met. The same goes for industry-wide targets. The Hospitality and Food Service Agreement on waste, for instance, set a 5% reduction in food and packaging waste and a 70% recycling target for the end of this year. This will bring some challenges for foodservice firms: critics will often argue that targets met are too easy, while targets missed are the result of inaction. Firms may feel they are damned if they do or damned if they don't, but ambition must prevail over ambivalence.

5 Direct line to the supplier



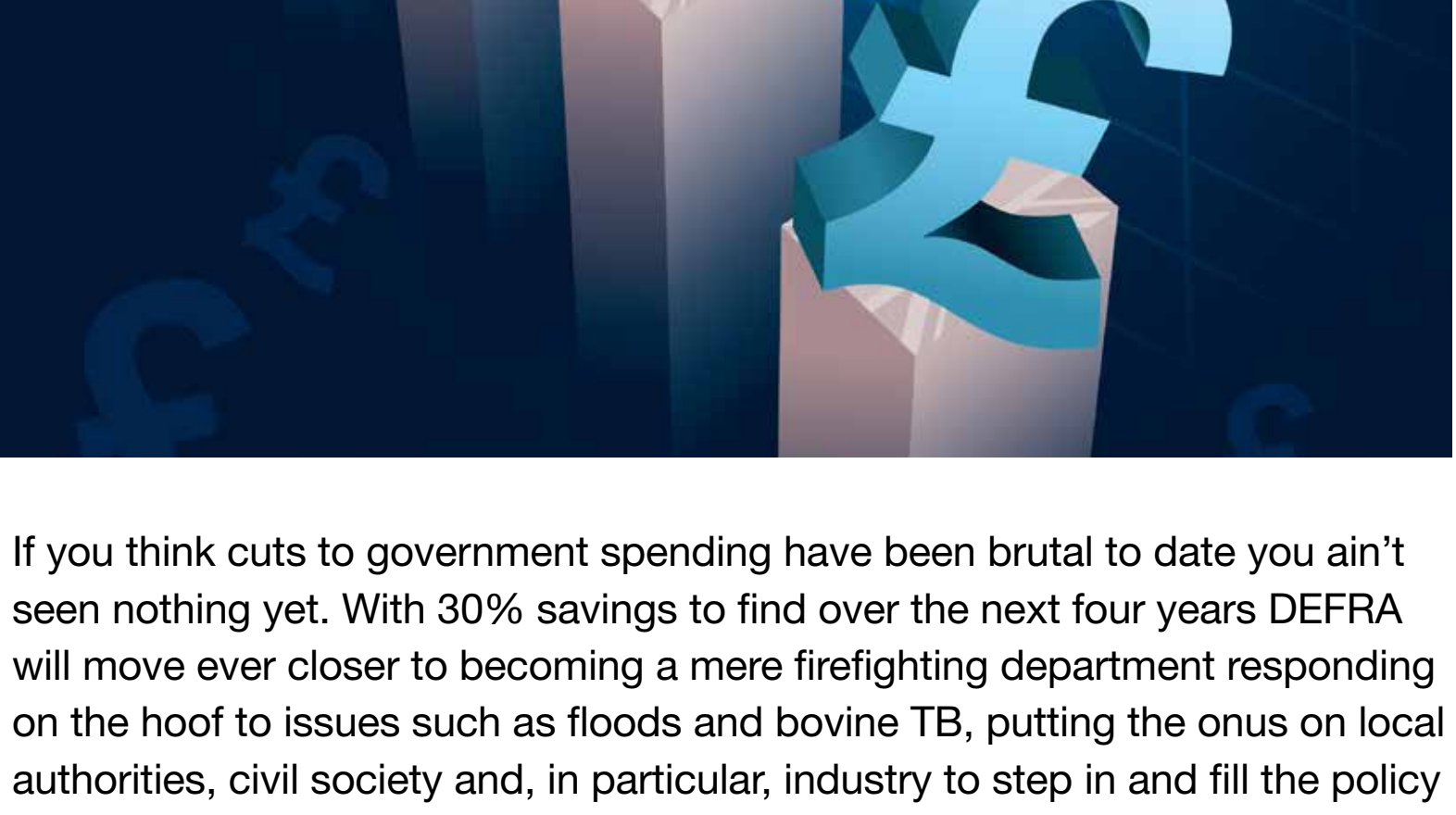
The Rainforest Alliance took a bit of a battering recently thanks to an investigation by the BBC into the working conditions on some of its certified tea plantations. Big questions are being asked of an auditing system the alliance noted as not perfect. Fairtrade hasn't escaped criticism either. Palm oil is the other biggie – the certification scheme run by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil is far from perfect with recent reports highlighting some rather dodgy auditing approaches. It's hard to move a whole supply chain as one, but these schemes are well-established now and the clock is ticking. It won't be surprising to see more companies set up their own direct sourcing programmes. Proving that the schemes are "fair" without the backing of a Rainforest Alliance or Fairtrade is the challenge.

6 Meat remains the elephant in the room



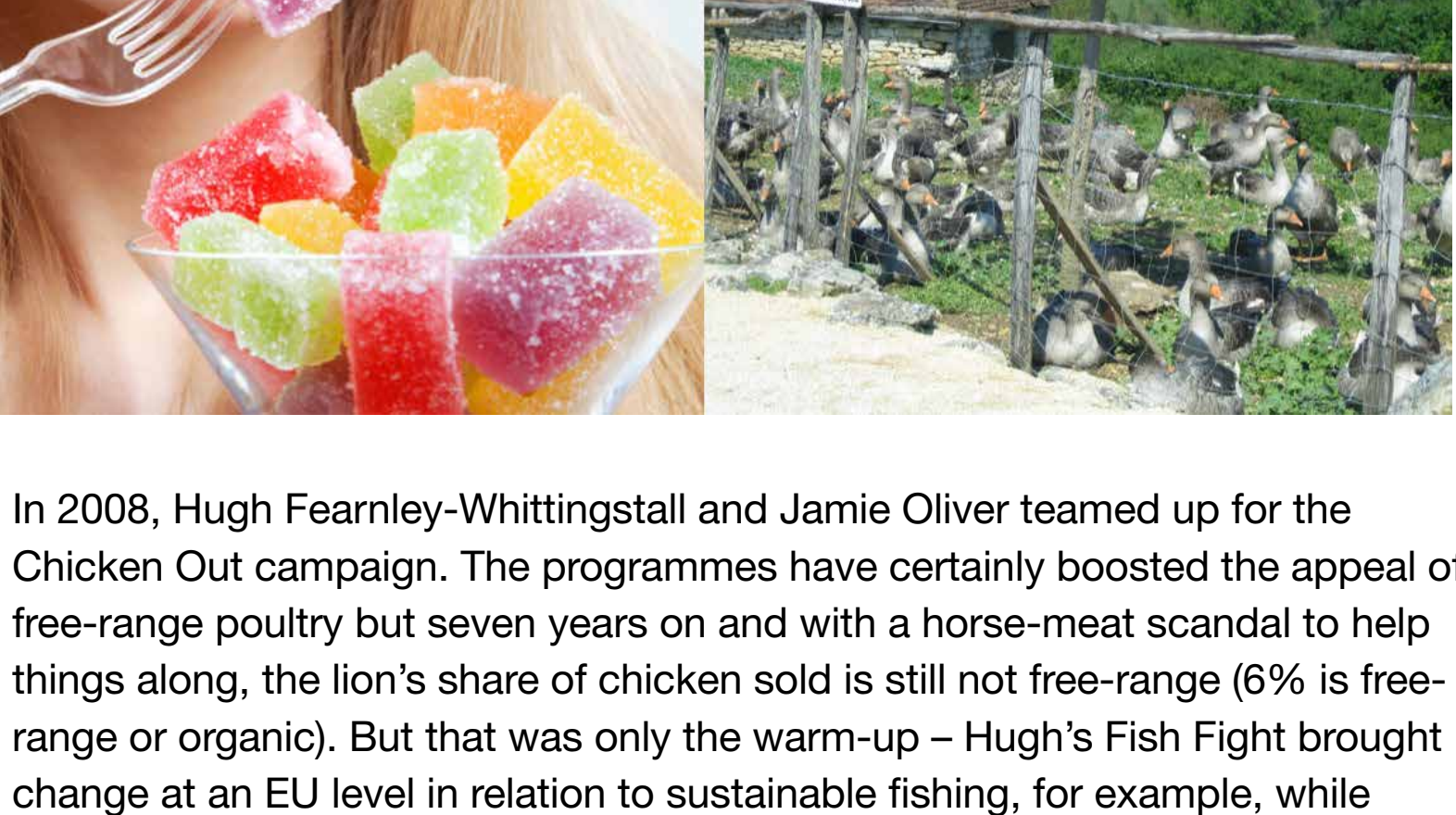
The evidence for reducing meat consumption to make diets more sustainable is compelling, yet there remains at best confusion and at worst ambivalence about how to translate this into the foodservice environment. Sure, some high-end restaurants like London's Grain Store are putting plants at the centre of the meal, but short of Ikea's vegan meatball there's little indication that mainstream businesses are actively engaging with the meat issue. It's hard to see this changing while the UK government persists in promoting livestock as a key growth industry, but as the evidence of meat's environmental impact continues to grow the pressure from civil society to tackle the consumption conundrum will only heighten.

7 Supply chain complacency is not worth the risk



The horse-meat scandal brutally exposed a lack of oversight of supply chain networks and ushered in a new focus by businesses on understanding where their vulnerabilities lie. That task could be about to get a lot tougher as continued political instability in key oil-producing nations, coupled with volatile supply of crops such as olive oil, cocoa and grapes – the latter threatening a Prosecco shortage – are set to send commodity prices oscillating wildly over the coming 12 months. Not only will this affect input costs, it will also heighten the risk of fraud in commodities that are suddenly attracting a far higher premium than before. With consumers demanding nothing less than full traceability and transparency in this post-horsegate world, businesses require complete oversight of every nook and cranny of their supply chain network.

8 'Small' government just got smaller



If you think cuts to government spending have been brutal to date you ain't seen moving ever closer. With 30% savings to find over the next four years DEFRA will move even closer to becoming a mere firefighting department responding on the hoof to issues such as floods and bovine TB, putting the onus on local authorities, civil society and, in particular, industry to step in and fill the policy void. The National Farmers Union is already the driving force behind a 25-year food and farming plan, while pressure on businesses to take voluntary steps to reverse the tide of obesity is certain to ramp up.

9 What next for celebrity chefs?



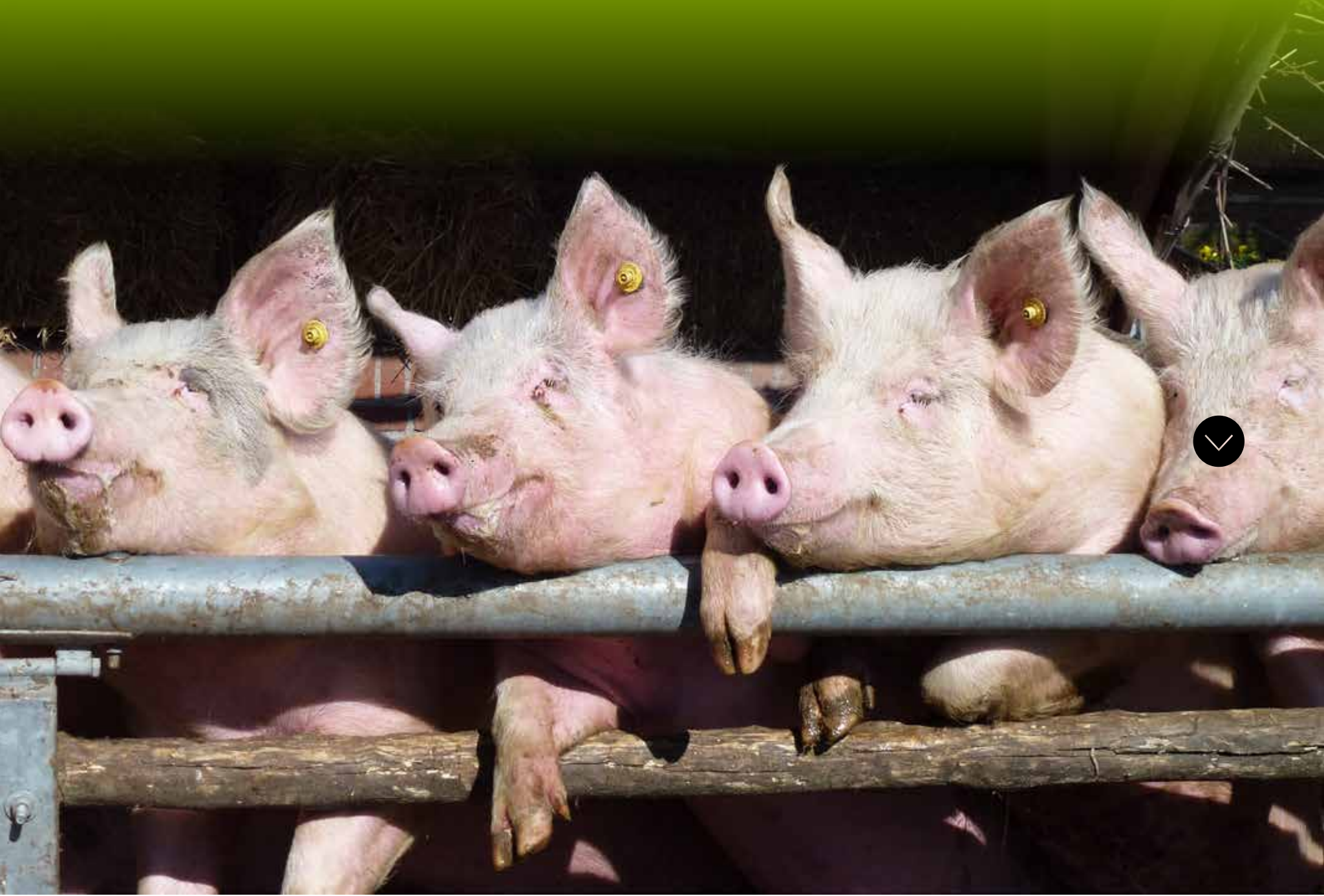
In 2008, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and Jamie Oliver teamed up for the Chicken Out campaign. The programmes have certainly boosted the appeal of free-range poultry but seven years on and with a horse-meat scandal to help things along, the lion's share of chicken sold is still not free-range (6% is free-range or organic). But that was only the warm-up – Hugh's Fish Fight brought change at an EU level in relation to sustainable fishing, for example, while his latest battle – with food waste – has captured the zeitgeist. Jamie is busy with sugar, of course. But what's next? Animal welfare may well come back on the radar, but the living wage (the "true" one rather than the government's April 2016 rise) is something that foodservice is steering well clear of. It'll be a brave man or woman who fronts that campaign, but how long can it be ignored?

10 Marketing madness

More and more customers expect the retail and foodservice sectors to treat suppliers and staff fairly, waste as little as possible, offer healthier options, cut their emissions and so on. This has left a marketing void which the "Mad Men" are finding hard to fill: largely gone are the big campaigns to highlight fair trade or recycled packaging. To make any noise it requires industry-leading initiatives – Tesco's waste audit and Sodexo's sustainable diets to name two (there aren't that many). These force the whole sector to stop and think and put the emphasis on the company to bring solutions rather than on the customer to make the right choices.

Tough decisions on ethical meat

Would your customers still eat your food if they knew where it came from? If not, you're at risk. Amy Fetzter reports from November's forum on animal welfare.



THREE-QUARTERS of consumers rank animal welfare concerns as the top issue which makes a company ethical, according to research firm Mintel. But is it a priority for foodservice and what are companies doing to reassure customers? Last month's Footprint Forum asked a panel of experts for their insight and here's what they said.

Question your supply. Dan Crossley, the executive director of the Food Ethics Council, posed this question: "If customers could see the conditions your animals are reared, kept, transported and slaughtered in, would they still eat your food?" He answered it himself: "If the answer is no or you're not sure, you're doing something wrong, whatever the market is telling you."

Be transparent ... Communicating best practice isn't always easy, however. Serving staff need to be aware what's going on up the chain. When staff "slap food on a plate in front of a customer", they should know it's been ethically reared and produced, "and that there's a lot of work going on behind the scenes", said David Nuttall, the catering manager of Harper Adams University.

... but careful. David Clarke, the CEO of the Red Tractor assurance scheme, recounted an anecdote about American consumers which highlighted that many don't want to be reminded that they're eating dead animals, so be careful how you connect them to your supply chain.



Ethical expense: Foodservice companies need to explain to customers why animals reared to high welfare standards will cost more.

Factor in fish. Both farmed and wild fish are often forgotten in the animal welfare debate but it's critical they are included, argued Crossley, as fish can be treated cruelly too.

Ethics is expensive. In October's *Footprint*, chef Allegra McEvedy highlighted how cost had driven caterers into a corner because they have to produce food at a particular price point for the majority. This is definitely a big headache. Nuttall observed that there is a failure to educate consumers that ethics need to cost more. He noted that higher-welfare animal products are one of his biggest costs as catering manager, but customers always want the cheapest price. Clarke agreed that farmers can only do what people pay for, but while the majority demand it, very few vote for welfare by price.

Keep an eye on imports. The UK's failure to be self-sufficient leads to increasing reliance on imported meat products, argued Tony Goodger, the head of operations for NCB Foodservice. But are imported products produced to the same standards? If prices are lower, is it through compromising welfare or other elements in the supply chain? High UK standards create a demand in the UK for certain welfare standards, and to play in our market, products should have to match those standards.

Less meat is more popular. Goodger observed that societal trends are changing. While China's meat consumption has quadrupled in recent years, meat will become more expensive in the future. In the UK, fewer people eat beef with a knife and fork, street food is on the rise, and these trends will knock meat from centre stage. This should lead to a reduction in how much meat is consumed per portion. This could help shift people towards eating less but higher-welfare meat products.

Difficulty in definition. Julia Wrathall, the head of science and farm animals at the RSPCA, said: "People have different definitions of what is acceptable. The RSPCA vision is that all animals should have a good life ultimately – but we're striving to ensure they have a life worth living." From the difficulties of agreeing what is acceptable, to the statistic that we'd need the area the size of Wales to rear all UK pigs outdoors, solutions need to be practical and achievable.

Caterers have to choose edit. Clarke noted that animal welfare "doesn't matter to all of the people all of the time. It will matter to most of the people, some of the time. And to some people all of the time." Supermarkets can reflect that range of interest with their offering, but caterers can't, so it is necessary to work out what the majority of your market want and to provide it.

Scotland gets serious on food waste

From New Year's Day any business producing more than a carrier bag's worth of waste a week will need to make sure it's collected separately. By Jamie Pitcairn.



NEW REGULATIONS coming into force on January 1st will change the way the food industry is required to manage its food waste in Scotland. From next year, food businesses (apart from those in rural areas) that produce more than 5kg of food waste per week will be required to present it for separate collection. This new threshold replaces the 50kg baseline that has been in place since January 1st 2014.

Reducing the threshold to 5kg is significant: that amount would fit into a normal plastic carrier bag. So most, if not all, small food businesses will have to segregate their food waste.

Here's what we know

- A food business is defined as “an undertaking, whether for profit or not, and whether public or private, carrying out any activity related to the processing, distribution, preparation or sale of food”. This means hotels, restaurants, cafés, shopping centre food courts, canteens, pubs and shops that serve food will all have to change the way they manage their food waste.
- The law excludes businesses that only prepare and sell drinks. Premises used to consume food brought from elsewhere (for example, an office where staff bring in food for personal consumption) are also exempt. However, a staff canteen where food is prepared, sold and consumed will have to separate its food waste.
- Non-rural food businesses will have a duty to ensure that food waste is not deposited directly or indirectly into a public drain or sewer. Food waste disposers such as macerators cannot be used to discharge the waste to a drain or sewer in a non-rural area where a separate food waste collection service is available.

SMEs listen up

Given the large number of businesses that will be affected, the majority in town and city centres, co-ordinating the collection of these relatively small amounts of food waste is a potential logistical problem for waste management companies.

What's more, food businesses will not want the waste being stored on site for any length of time in order to negate any hygiene risks. I have spoken to a number of waste management companies recently and they tell me awareness is still low among smaller food businesses such as cafés and bistros, so it's important that those businesses take action soon.

If you're unsure about what to do get in touch with a waste management company as soon as possible to agree a collection solution that works for both parties.

Ambitious plans

The environmental benefits of recycling this waste is that it avoids the creation of the harmful greenhouse gas methane, which is released when food is disposed of in landfill. Renewable energy can also be generated if the waste is processed in an anaerobic digester.

Businesses in Scotland currently throw away more than 800,000 tonnes of food waste costing tens of millions of pounds in disposal and material costs. And that's the additional benefit of the ambitious Waste (Scotland) Regulations: they force businesses to separate waste and, from experience, once a business owner or manager physically sees the amount of food waste being produced it is a real driver for change in their business practices.

When waste is separated, prevention becomes a business priority. And when food waste is reduced, margins go up.

A good example is the Timberyard restaurant in Edinburgh, where kitchen management means that very little food is wasted and all vegetable waste is composted, providing the nutrients needed to grow salad leaves and herbs in the grounds of the restaurant.

These regulations should be embraced rather than feared. Larger businesses, producing 50kg of food waste a week, have been separating their waste for two years now and the most important lesson we've learned is the importance of staff engagement. Providing clearly labelled bins and giving appropriate training to staff to capture as much food waste as possible and minimise contamination is really important.

If you're based south of the border, you may not be required to separate food waste by law, but that shouldn't stop you.

Jamie Pitcairn is director (Scotland) for Ricardo Energy & Environment

The future of e-procurement and how this will play a vital role in the future of sustainable hospitality'

Acquire's Andy Badger tells Footprint



Andy Badger
Managing Director,
Acquire Services

Why do you think procurement is moving away from traditional methods and going online?

Andy Badger (AB): Nowadays, it's rare to book a flight, purchase event tickets or even perform simple banking tasks without entering the virtual world. According to the Office of National Statistics, 38 million Britons use the internet every day and access to the web using a mobile phone has more than doubled between 2010 and 2014 from 24% to 58% – so it makes perfect sense for procurement to go the same way.”

How can going digital when it comes to procurement help improve a hospitality business's sustainability credentials?

AB: By embracing digital procurement, operators can take the sustainability of their business to the next level. Harnessing data from digital platforms enables operators to see the bigger picture. Improving sustainability and adhering to CSR policies isn't just about singling out one element, say food miles for example, it's all about securing the right partners in the first place. Selecting ethical, accredited producers who have their own sustainability agenda will ensure full transparency across the whole supply and buying chain – which digital platforms allow you to do.

For example, our Green10 platform provides online metrics for specific 'pillars', each relating to responsible sourcing, purchasing and sustainability, such as: Food Mileage, Local Sourcing, Environmental Profile, Seasonality, Renewable, Culture, Animal Welfare, Wellbeing, Packaging and Food Waste. Technologies such as these act as yardsticks so that operators can align their purchasing strategy to the 'pillars' which best reflect their CSR strategy and business objectives.

Why is it important for the hospitality industry to adopt sustainable practices?

AB: In the UK alone, £3.5 billion a year, which is equivalent to 1.3 billion meals, is wasted in the hospitality sector. This in turn is equivalent to one in five meals and a potential waste of £17,000 per year to individual restaurants – so keeping on top of food waste is not only beneficial for the environment, but it is also a great way to save money, which could be spent improving other areas of the business.

Not only that, but in the UK, our food travels over 30 billion kilometres a year and is responsible for adding nearly 19 million tonnes of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere – of which 10% comes directly from the catering industry. So, if you are a large hospitality business, sourcing British meat, fish and vegetables could significantly cut your carbon footprint.

It's also about safeguarding the future of the hospitality industry. At this year's Restaurant Show, TV chef Arthur Potts Dawson, who trained under the Roux brothers, called upon young chefs to spread sustainability messages across the Hospitality Industry to ensure its future and to take responsibility for their actions and here at Acquire, we echo the same sentiment. And with Raymond Blanc, one of the industry's most well-known and decorated chefs, claiming that he rates sustainability over Michelin Stars, it really is time that the Industry stands up and starts doing their part.

What do you do about checking that suppliers you recommend are up to scratch in terms of their due diligence responsibilities?

AB: We only appoint suppliers after they have been assessed within our own 'Due Diligence' process and have satisfied our management team that they are sufficiently capable and responsible to provide products and services. It means our customers can be rest assured they are working with the best possible procurement partners who will deliver what they say they will.

Is there pressure from consumers for hospitality businesses to be more environmentally conscious?

AB: We've seen strong evidence that the 'environmentally conscious' market is significantly growing and recent findings show that the majority of diners (70%) would prefer to eat in a restaurant which acts sustainably. While the same study reveals that 56% of consumers are willing to pay more for a meal from a sustainable operator.

Are there any other benefits that online procurement platforms offer to hospitality businesses?

AB: As well as developing a CSR strategy, boosting green credentials, reducing carbon footprint and improving business's bottom line, there are numerous benefits to be reaped from a fully integrated online procurement platform. Using e-platforms not only helps operators buy more effectively through improving business process but also centralises transactions so they can be easily tracked and monitored, streamlining the whole buying process.

Is it costly to install a digital online procurement platform?

AB: It's true that a few years ago Web based systems that managed relatively complex business processes were for large scale operations – but now such systems are completely inclusive and available to all – big or small.

Can we work out how to work together?

Collaboration is the key to sustainability but sharing information with rivals is a tough idea to sell to boardrooms.



THE MESSAGE from October's Footprint Forum was clear: businesses need to collaborate in order to significantly reduce their environmental impacts (in this case through logistics). What's less clear is how.

Capitalism remains the foundation of our economic system, which means firms have to compete. The successful ones rely on innovation and invention to stay ahead of the game. So how on earth can they be expected to share ideas, even if it's for the greater good?

This is a conundrum that those leading on corporate sustainability face every day. Paraphrasing from a conversation with one forum member over drinks: "If I go and tell the board that we should collaborate with our competitors on a new initiative and it will save us all the same amount of money, they probably won't be interested, especially if it means sharing information. But if I tell them I've got an innovation that will save us money and screw over our main competitors, they will be all over it."

It's a fair point, and one also highlighted during Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's "War on Waste" series for BBC1. The celebrity chef and campaigner was left totally bemused as to why supermarkets couldn't, together, reduce the severity of their specifications for fruit and vegetables; specifications that result in perfectly edible produce being ploughed back into the fields and, in some cases, cause the demise of their suppliers.

This reluctance to collaborate perhaps explains why industry and government are finally tiring of voluntary agreements. The Public Health Responsibility Deal is reportedly on its deathbed; meanwhile all has gone remarkably quiet in terms of the Hospitality and Foodservice Agreement on waste, although an update is apparently imminent.

The announcement this week that seven foodservice companies are to collaborate in a "green alliance" of their own is an interesting one, therefore.

The press release states that the Plate2planet platform is "a forum for likeminded caterers, providing access to useful and practical information for those looking for help and solutions including how-to guides, inspiring case studies, guidance on regulations, handy tools, and inspiring supply chain stories".

It's a laudable initiative and one on which *Footprint* was founded (take a look at issues circa 2011 and they are full of case studies and how-to guides). There's a value in continuing to share best practice: Unilever's United Against Waste campaign – based on a similar premise to Plate2planet but restricted to food waste – has certainly inspired waste-savers in many small businesses.

But for the larger firms, much of the low-hanging fruit has been picked. As the forum member quoted above suggested, anything really pioneering remains a closely guarded secret, not least because reducing environmental impacts often leads to improving the bottom line.

So where does this leave Plate2planet? The platform encompasses everything from waste and energy to product development and community relations (but not health, it seems). It could be a valuable tool for small businesses but it's the basics, at least as far as the early content is concerned.

A cynic would, therefore, see it as a marketing gimmick designed to inflate the corporate social responsibility credentials of those involved (the press release suggests the group has been dubbed "the sustainability seven") and offer them a bit of breathing space so they don't have to tackle the big issues that can require collaboration with the competition.

The brands involved are already well-known for their sustainability efforts, but it's debatable whether any are in direct competition with one another. What's more, this is a public platform so the insight given away will remain the "low-hanging fruit" rather than the "screw the competition" initiatives that can really drive change.

We'd be delighted to be proved wrong.

Plastic plague?

New research found microplastic debris in a quarter of fish sold for human consumption. But does marine litter really pose a health and safety risk?



Photo: Tracey Williams

What are microplastics?

Microplastics can be divided into two categories – primary and secondary. Primary microplastics are manufactured particles, such as pellets used as the raw material to make almost every plastic product (also known as “nurdles”), or microbeads used in cosmetics and industrial abrasives. Secondary microplastics are when larger plastic items, such as bags and bottles, break down into tiny fragments.

Where do they come from?

There are a number of ways that microplastics can find their way into the sea: littering by the public, poor waste management systems for handling larger plastic items, or microbeads from cosmetics being washed down the sink. Poor site management by plastics manufacturers can result in pellets being washed into drains and “escaping” into the sea. The pellets can also be spilled at sea – in October thousands of them washed up on Cornish beaches.

Who is to blame?

The UK plastics industry tends to point the finger firmly at the public, blaming them for littering and calling for “behaviour change”. Environmental groups would argue that not enough is being done to reduce primary microplastics either. Progress has been made on [microbeads in cosmetics](#). With plastic pellets, in the UK, some other European countries and China, there is a project called Operation Clean Sweep through which companies voluntarily take action to limit pellet loss. But the system isn’t audited and progress is hard to define.

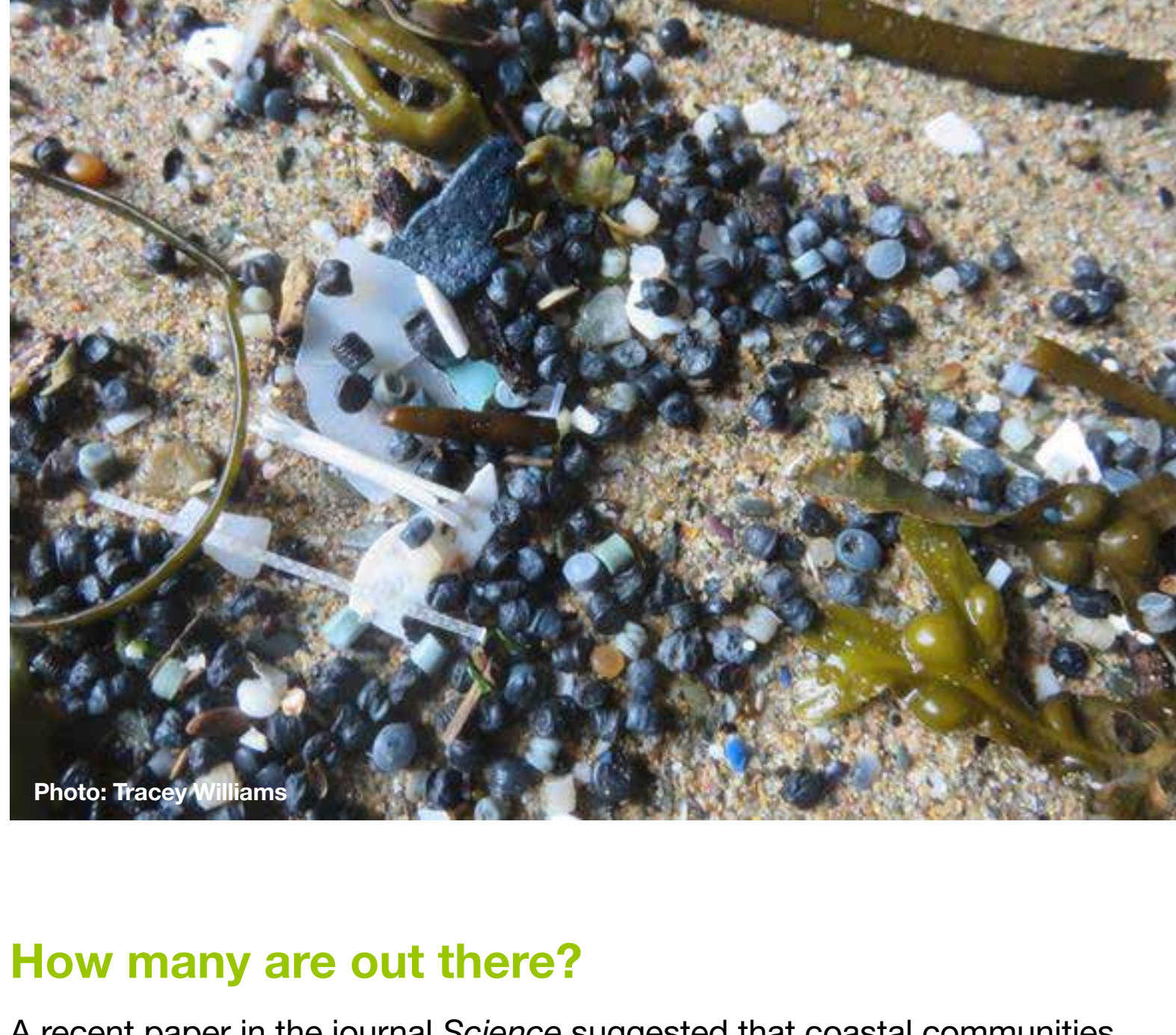


Photo: Tracey Williams

How many are out there?

A recent paper in the journal *Science* suggested that coastal communities dumped 8m tonnes of plastics in 2010. Another international team of researchers reported 5.25 trillion pieces of marine plastic – most of them microplastics measuring less than 5mm. But these are estimates. It’s pretty easy to spot marine litter when it’s a bottle or a bag, but the fragmented pieces can be microscopic. Plastic pellets are also difficult to see with the naked eye – 500 of them would fit in an eggcup. The Global Ocean Commission has estimated there are 3,500 plastic pellets per square kilometre floating on the Sargasso Sea. Near industrial centres in New Zealand, 100,000 pellets per square kilometre have been observed on the beach.

Where do they end up?

That’s the big issue. Studies have shown that alarming numbers of seabirds have ingested plastic (every fulmar tested in the English Channel since 1979 has had plastic in its gut). But more recently the debris is cropping up in the fish that we eat.

How much is in the fish we eat?

Research at Plymouth University found plastics in 184 of 504 fish they examined, including whiting and gurnard. There were about two pieces per fish, mostly polyamide and the semi-synthetic fibre rayon, which is found in everything from clothing to tyres and industrial hoses. Only three fish had gobbled up any polystyrene. Another study of Norway lobsters collected in the Clyde Sea found 83% had ingested plastic including fragments of plastic bags.

But it doesn’t do any harm, does it?

We’re not sure. Recent research, published in the journal *Nature*, showed that 28% of fish and shellfish on sale in Indonesia had eaten man-made debris, and all of it was plastic. They noted: “Because anthropogenic debris is associated with a cocktail of priority pollutants, some of which can transfer to animals upon ingestion, this work supports concern that chemicals from anthropogenic debris may be transferring to humans via diets containing fish and shellfish, raising important questions regarding the bioaccumulation and biomagnification of chemicals and consequences for human health.”



Why are the plastics toxic?

The British Plastics Federation asserts that “the notion that plastics materials and products are ‘toxic’ is both misleading and incorrect”. Most persistent bioaccumulating toxins (PBTs) are banned but they remain in the marine environment. Microplastic particles readily attract PBTs, as well as other chemicals including DDT. The plastics can suck up the PBTs like a sponge, giving the organism a chemical cocktail when it ingests them. One study has also shown zooplankton gobbling up microplastics.

So is this a health risk?

Not necessarily. We don’t know how this toxicity is transferred to the organism or how it accumulates further up the food chain. “These chemicals can come off in the gut quite rapidly,” notes Professor Richard Thompson from Plymouth University’s school of marine science, “but that doesn’t prove harm. My intuition is that the quantities are low in individual [fish] and there’s no clear evidence that the transfer of chemicals is that substantial.”

But what about that study in Belgium?

The study, reported widely, suggested that the average seafood consumer would ingest 11,000 plastic particles a year. Thompson has calculated that in order to achieve that “you’d have to eat 22,000 mussels a year”. But this doesn’t mean the UK can turn a blind eye. “The message isn’t ‘toxic seafood is going to ruin our health’,” says Professor Tamara Galloway, an ecotoxicologist at the University of Exeter. However, given the “massive amounts” of microplastics circulating in the marine environment it’s “only sensible that we look at this”.

What does the Food Standards Agency say?

It’s certainly on the agency’s radar. A spokesman explains: “We are aware of the evidence of a potential risk that chemicals present in plastic particles could contribute to the transfer of chemical contaminants through the marine food chain. This is an emerging issue and we are currently assessing the available information.”

Do I need to take any action?

Microplastics might become a concern for consumers – whether for health or environmental reasons – but it has already come to the attention of some well-known food and drink brands and companies that are keen to ensure the packaging they use is responsibly manufactured. An Operation Clean Sweep-certified packaging system may be some way off, but it wouldn’t hurt to ask questions of your packaging suppliers to see if they are reducing pellet loss.

Coconut shy? Don't be.



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