

September 2008

# TheVoice

FDF: Speaking for the food and drink manufacturing industry

## New EU proposals will cause food prices to rocket, says FDF

The Food and Drink Federation is warning that a new EU proposal to change the rules on the use of plant protection products could result in significant reductions in crop yields, causing the price of key manufacturing ingredients, such as wheat and potatoes, to rocket by up to 50%.

According to an impact assessment published by the UK's Pesticides Safety Directorate, the new EU proposal would reduce the number of plant protection products available for use by 15%. Given the importance of plant protection products for controlling disease and weeds, the impacts upon yields for cereals, oil seeds and vegetables would be significant. Cereal yields, for example, could fall by 20% to 30%.

We are not alone in strongly voicing our genuine concerns about this proposal. Organisations from across the food chain have joined forces to warn policy makers in Brussels of the negative impact of introducing such changes at a time when rocketing food prices are already making life difficult for both industry and consumers.

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## Report says Food Matters, and we'd agree!

The Cabinet Office's groundbreaking 'Food Matters' report rightly recognises the importance of maintaining a supportive environment for UK producers. Importantly, it also commits the Government to delivering joined-up responses to the complex debates on food security, safety, health and the environment.

We now look forward to working in partnership with Government to help it deliver a policy agenda that will also sustain a vibrant food manufacturing sector here in the UK.

FDF is engaging early in the debate – joining forces with the National Farmers' Union and the British Retail Consortium to host an event at this year's Labour Party Conference to explore the issues raised by 'Food Matters'.

## Industry supports Tories' new deal on public health

Food and drink manufacturers have welcomed the new Responsibility Deal on public health unveiled by Andrew Lansley, the Shadow Secretary of State for Health.

The idea of such Deals is to develop 'a non-bureaucratic partnership with the business community, together to tackle key challenges in society'.

And FDF believes the package of measures launched by the Conservatives is a pragmatic approach to a complex issue; one that clearly recognises the areas where industry can make a real difference to improving the lives of citizens.

In particular, we are delighted the Conservatives are backing nutrition labelling based on Guideline Daily Amounts as the best way of helping consumers choose healthier diets.

The Conservatives have created a working group to look in more detail at the proposals. The group is chaired by Dave Lewis, chairman of Unilever UK, a long-standing FDF member company.

[www.fdf.org.uk](http://www.fdf.org.uk)

Food and Drink  
Federation



If you want information about anything in this newsletter, please call Luke Gibbs 020 7420 7129

## FDF joins forces with Foresight to run obesity event

FDF is organising a high profile event in London in the autumn to mark the first anniversary of publication of the Foresight report on obesity.

The report warned that obesity was rapidly becoming a consequence of modern life and mapped out the complexity of factors that contribute to society's expanding waistlines.

Our event on November 10 will bring together industry leaders, public health experts, journalists and members of the Foresight project team to debate a key question: are convenience foods a help or hindrance in tackling obesity?

The event is free to attend for Parliamentarians. If you are interested, please do get in touch to reserve your place at what looks set to be a stimulating debate.

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## How FDF works for its members

The Food and Drink Federation speaks on behalf of one of the most important manufacturing sectors in the country, directly employing almost 470,000 people.

In promoting and protecting the interests of our members, FDF is focusing on the issues that matter most to their businesses and to the consumers our industry serves:

- Food Safety and Science
- Health and Wellbeing
- Sustainability and Competitiveness

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*Our front cover picture was taken at the Harlesden factory of United Biscuits, a member of FDF for more than 10 years.*

## Sector launches fewer and friendlier food miles initiative

A packed Members' Dining Room at the House of Commons was the venue for the launch of FDF's latest environmental initiative by Food Minister Lord Rooker.

Some 40 food and drink companies have pledged to make fewer and friendlier food transport miles by signing up to FDF's Environmental Checklist and Clause for Greener Food Transport. This initiative is the latest step by the food and drink manufacturing industry towards making a real difference to the environment as set out in FDF's Five-fold Environmental Ambition.

Lord Rooker, Minister of State for Sustainable Food, Farming and Animal Health, said: "The food industry makes an important contribution to the success of the UK economy and it is good to see it also showing leadership in the delivery of a more sustainable future."

The voluntary initiative was also applauded by Jim Fitzpatrick, Minister for Transport, who said: "I welcome its goal for fewer and friendlier food transport miles which shows commitment to a transport policy that delivers economic growth and lower carbon emissions."

Iain Ferguson, FDF President and chief executive of Tate & Lyle, said: "Transporting food and drink, like all other goods, has environmental and social impacts. FDF members are making a significant commitment to reducing these impacts, and are once again showing leadership on an important environmental agenda."



*FDF President Iain Ferguson, with our event sponsor Paddy Tipping and Food Minister Lord Rooker at the launch event*

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## SMEs ensure their voice is heard

Small and medium sized food and drink manufacturers believe it is virtually impossible to navigate through the array of agencies, bodies and departments established to support SMEs.

They complain that the existing framework is bureaucratic and disjointed. In particular, those keen to invest in developing staff are frustrated at how difficult it can be to find help, advice and training courses to meet their needs.

These were some of the key messages to emerge from an SME roundtable discussion organised by FDF recently in Parliament with the support of our sponsor Mark Williams.

SMEs are vital to our industry. The overwhelming majority of the 6,500 food manufacturers operating in the UK are small, medium sized or micro businesses. While the SME sector has stimulated much of the innovation in the food sector in recent years, our meeting identified that much more should be done to nurture this strong entrepreneurial spirit.