

PLANET FOOD

March 2001

INTRODUCTION TO SITE

This is a site for food lovers. But many of us who love our food want to know a bit more about how it is produced, where it comes from, how it effects the environment and whether it is good for us.

**organic ♥ food miles ♥ seasonality ♥ animal welfare
♥ healthy eating ♥ GM foods ♥ vegetarianism ♥
labelling ♥ additives ♥ antibiotics ♥ hormones ♥ fair
trade ♥ chemicals ♥ local produce ♥ quality ♥
pesticides**

Every month *Future-Friendly Food* will:

- ♥ pick an ingredient and tell you more
- ♥ meet a food producer or supplier
- ♥ give you future-friendly food recipes
- ♥ tell you what's in season
- ♥ discuss what's in the news

1. EDITORIAL – MARCH 2001

Hello. I'm Julia Hailes. I am very excited to have been asked by BBC Nature Online to write *Future-Friendly Food*.

I would definitely describe myself as a 'foodie'. But it is not just eating food that I love, it is looking at it too. Just visualise a market stall piled high with tomatoes, lemons or lychees. Or think about a vegetable garden with rows of peas, wigwams of beans and branches of purple sprouting. And what about the delicatessen with an assortment of delicious cheeses and pâtés!

At the same time, I'm aware that all is not well in the food world. Remember Edwina Curry telling us we risk getting salmonella from eating eggs? Or John Gummer feeding his daughter a hamburger to convince us not to worry about BSE? And the government, advising us to peel apples before we eat them, if we want to avoid overdosing on pesticide residues? Think about the GM headlines over the past year or so. And even more recently the BBC programme showing the impacts of fish-farming.

Every month the *Future Friendly Food* column will pick an ingredient – cheese, chips or chocolate; bananas, berries or beef; lamb, lettuce or lentils – talk about related issues, meet producers and come up with delicious recipe ideas. We will also give a perspective on some of the latest Food News.

To find out more about me you can see my profile or visit my website on www.juliahailes.com

JULIA HAILES – PROFILE



Julia Hailes is probably best known as the co-author of the number one best-selling *Green Consumer Guide* published in the UK in 1988. It sold over one million copies worldwide.

She has now co-authored eight books with John Elkington, the most recent of which was *The New Foods Guide – what's here, what's coming, what it means for us*, published by Gollancz in 1999.

In 1987 Julia Hailes founded **SustainAbility Ltd**, with John Elkington, where she was a director until 1995.

SustainAbility is a leading edge environmental consultancy with an international profile. She now works as an independent freelance consultant advising on business and sustainability issues.



Between 1994 and 2000 Julia was a non-executive director of Out of this World (www.ootw.co.uk) a small chain of 'alternative' supermarkets. In 2001 she was made a non-executive director of Jupiter Global Green Investment Trust (www.jupiteronline.co.uk/greens.index.htm), set up by Jupiter Asset Management.

Julia Hailes has spoken at conferences world-wide including Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Canada, the US and throughout Europe. She has also made numerous television and radio appearances in Britain and abroad, including presenting a weekly series of environmental programmes on UK network television.

In 1989 Julia was elected to the UN 'Global 500 Roll of Honour' for her 'outstanding environmental achievements'. She is a recognised expert on eco-labelling and is currently deputy chair of the Advisory Committee on Consumer Products and the Environment (ACCPE).

Julia was awarded an MBE in the New Years Honours list in 1999 and is a District Councillor in South Somerset. She is married with three sons – Connor, Rollo and Monty – aged 6, 4 and 2.

WHAT IS FAIR TRADE?

A system of 'fair trade' has been set up to help workers and producers in the third world to get a 'fair price' for what they sell and to encourage better working conditions.

Organisations like Oxfam and Christian Aid, amongst others have clubbed together and formed the Fairtrade Foundation.. The idea is to get a better deal for marginalized and disadvantaged third world producers. By choosing products with the Fairtrade mark, consumers are guaranteed that they have been produced for Fairtrade standards.

Common principles of this standard are:

- Small scale farmers can participate in a democratic organisation
- Plantation and factory workers can participate in trade union activities, have decent wages, improved housing and better health & safety standards
- No child or forced labour
- Programmes for environmental sustainability

And fairtrade terms of trading require that:

- The price paid to producers covers the cost of production
- Payments should be made in advance to avoid small producer organisations falling into debt
- Producers should use the extra money they get to improve their living and working conditions

- Contracts should allow long term planning and sustainable production practices.

Fair trade products available in the UK include cocoa, chocolate, coffee, tea, sugar, honey and bananas. Orange juice is in development. Leading fair trade brands include *Café Direct*, *Clipper Teas*, *Co-op Divine*, *Equal Exchange*, *Green & Black*, *Hampstead*, *Oxfam*, *Ridgeways* and *Traidcraft*.

FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT – 5-18TH MARCH 2001

In the first two weeks of March, *Fairtrade Fortnight* will be raising awareness and spreading the word about fair trade.

It is supported by CAFOD, Christian Aid, Comic Relief, Oxfam, People and Planet, Tearfund, Townswomen's Guild, Traidcraft, the Women's Institute and the World Development Movement.

The Fairtrade Fortnight Action Pack is full of ideas for events to support the Fortnight, from a Fairtrade Breakfast for friends to a stand in the local high street. For more information email: fortnight@fairtrade.org.uk. Look out for displays and in-store sampling.

FAIRTRADE BRINGS HOPE TO THE WINDWARD ISLANDS

Traditionally Britain has imported lots of bananas from the Windward Islands. But the World Trade Organisation (WTO) has now ruled – in the interests of free trade – that bananas from this region should compete equally with bananas grown on large-scale plantations in Central America.

For banana farmers like Nioka, this was devastating news. She farms a two acre plot of land in the north of St. Vincent in the Windward Islands. She says "Bananas are my livelihood, they are what helps me to meet the needs of my family". With four children to support her situation is not untypical.

Luckily Nioka can now sell bananas through Fairtrade. A system has been set up through the Windward Island National Farmers Association (WINFA), which is a co-operative representing producer groups.

Nioka is one of 190 farmers registered with the scheme. They have orders for Fairtrade Mark bananas because people in the UK are willing to pay a fair price for their produce. This supports rural communities - slowing migration to the cities, helps farmers improve their education and allows them to work towards better environmental standards amongst other things.

Fairtrade bananas offer real hope of a future – a sustainable future – for Windward Island banana production. And many of the islanders depend on it.

GOING BANANAS

How do you like your banana? Apparently most of us prefer a spotless, yellow fruit of uniform shape and taste, and we want it to be available all year round. These seemingly simple tastes and priorities have impacts, which are felt around the world.

The number of bananas consumed in the UK has doubled in 10 years – the average Briton eats 11kg (25lbs) a year. As a result of increased demand, forests have been felled to make way for plantations and soil erosion has increased, causing pesticides to run off the land and poison the rivers and seas. In Costa Rica, the country's coral reefs have been irreparably damaged.

There are two main types of bananas – 'dollar' bananas and 'Carribbean' bananas. Dollar bananas are grown mainly on large plantations in Central America, covering huge areas with single banana species and making the crops more vulnerable to pests.

This means that they tend to use large quantities of pesticides, including organophosphates, some of which are banned for use in the countries that consume them. Banana plantations account for the fact that, per head of population, Costa Rica is the largest consumer of agrochemicals in the world.

Caribbean bananas are smaller and sweeter. They are produced in the Windward Islands on small and medium-size plantations, and in Jamaica on small farms and larger plantations. Smaller quantities of chemicals are used, other plants are grown among the bananas for subsistence food, and the fruit provides an income for farmers who rely on this crop for their living. Not surprisingly these are the bananas promoted by fair trade organisations.

Source: Manual 2000, John Elkington and Julia Hailes

HUGH FEARNLEY-WHITTINGSTALL'S FAIRTRADE BANANA SMOOTHIE

"I have one of these for breakfast almost every day – and I never get bored of it"

1 large or two small Fairtrade bananas
200ml ice cold milk (skimmed if you prefer)
1 tablespoon rolled oats (porridge oats)
2 ice cubes

Place all the ingredients in a blender and whiz for approximately one minute until smooth. Pour into a tall glass and enjoy. Serves one.

Bananas with the Fairtrade Mark are currently sold in most Co-op, Waitrose and Sainsbury's stores.

Glossary

Organophosphates

Among the most controversial pesticides in recent years have been organophosphates. Some of their effects are believed to include: attacking the nervous system, with early symptoms including headaches, excessive sweating, breathing difficulty, vomiting, blurred vision, slurred speech, slow thinking and loss of memory. Later come convulsions, coma and even – in extreme circumstances – death. Organophosphates are commonly used on a variety of fruit and vegetables, including bananas, carrots, cabbages and broccoli. They are also used in sheep dips, where they are thought to have caused serious illness in farmers.