

A great tasting magazine with proven nutritional benefits

# The FOOD MAGAZINE

**Campaigning for safer, healthier food for all**

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## Health charities boost food company profits

**Food products with charity link-ups may make thousands of pounds for the charities – but they are making millions for the food companies**

**H**ealth charities and medical associations are allowing their logos to appear on food products in order to raise money and promote healthy eating. But according to new research from the Food Commission, the logo schemes could be doing more for company profits than for public health.

Logos or endorsements from health charities and medical associations appear on brands of fruit juice, tomatoes, cooking oil, margarine, porridge oats, milk, yogurt and even tea bags.

We examined 20 products that carried the name or logo of a national health charity or medical association, in ways that consumers

could reasonably assume to be an endorsement of the food type or food brand.

Our survey found that health charities and medical associations had usually entered into marketing partnerships with national brands.

Products carrying the logos of health charities and medical associations usually cost significantly more – sometimes ten times more – than other food products with similar or the same nutritional value.

Also, in almost every case, the health charity or medical association was failing to use its influence either to promote healthier, affordable foods or to use the opportunity to improve public education and public health.

**Karyatis Olive Oil carries the Cancer Research Campaign logo and dietary advice. It costs three times as much as other olive oils. Does the charity endorse such a price premium?**



The Family Heart Association promises not to endorse any other spread or margarine that might compete with Flora's sales

### Children's food on trial...

Hundreds of parents have contacted the Food Commission to support our demands for better food for children.

Mums and dads are signing up to join the new Parents Jury – a chance to make their voices heard and to improve the health of children throughout the UK.

In the first few weeks since the launch of the Jury, parents have sent in examples of

children's foods that are particularly unhealthy, or which are advertised in especially manipulative or annoying ways. They have also been suggesting foods and advertising practices that deserve praise. Awards will be made to the best and worst examples.



See page 20 for details of the new Parents Jury

Turn to page 12 for results of the survey

**Get the facts with the Food Magazine**

# CHECKOUT

Special report on the food companies that benefit by associating themselves with charitable or medical causes...

## Cause or compromise?

**Health claims on food products may make you feel sceptical. But add the trusted logo of a health charity or medical association and you may be more likely to buy the product. The Food Commission's latest research shows that your trust might be misplaced.**

**B**rowse the shelves of any supermarket and you'll find healthy sounding claims attached to almost every type of food. Health-related descriptions appear on a diverse selection of products, from tinned spaghetti, margarine, cereals, jelly sweets, tinned fish and fruit, to squash, bread, tea bags, processed cheese and chocolate.

Some descriptions boast of the presence of a particular nutrient, such as calcium; some products proclaim added vitamins; others claim benefits for particular organs of the human body, or a reduced risk of disease by eating the food regularly. Some of these claims are backed up by scientific evidence. Others are not, and contribute to much confusion over food and health.

In order to stand out amid this clamour of claims, endorsements (or apparent endorsements) are often used by food marketers to add weight and authority to their claim, and to make one brand seem superior to others. Currently, heart-health

claims on Nestlé Cheerios cereal are reinforced by BBC TV science reporter Judith Hann; the bone-health benefits of Osteocare calcium supplements are promoted in association with the English National Ballet; and Olympic rower Steve Redgrave tells of his remarkable recovery from high cholesterol levels in order to help sell Flora Pro. Activ margarine.

Over the past year, the Food Commission has been monitoring new endorsement-style marketing techniques popular with food manufacturers. These are in the form of marketing partnerships between food companies and health charities or medical associations.

A charity such as the British Heart Foundation, or a medical association such as the National Osteoporosis Society, enters into partnership with food companies and allows the organisation's logo to appear on food products. Sometimes these marketing partnerships take the form of simple donation schemes. Here, the food company donates money to a health charity or cause in return for using the organisation's logo on food packaging to announce its public good will. In other schemes, the link-up between the two organisations is used

to make, imply or reinforce a claim for the health benefits of consuming the food.

The common and critical factor is that any marketing claims for the health benefits of the food product are strengthened by the trust that people have in these health charities for offering impartial advice on health matters.

Yet, as not-for-profit organisations enter into commercial relationships with food companies, questions start to arise. Are the claims supported by these marketing partnerships scientifically substantiated? Are they trustworthy? Who is making the health statements – the company or the health charity or medical association? If a logo appears on the food packaging, what exactly does it represent? Did a fee change hands, and if so, did this compromise the accuracy of the claims? Does the food carrying the logo offer the best health benefits available? And, crucially, will following the advice help people stay healthy?



The British Dietetic Association helps to promote pressed fruit juices in Safeway and Marks & Spencer that cost between 1.5 and 5.4 times as much as other pure fruit juices. Whilst the BDA does good work, the unintended implication here is that we should spend more to stay healthy.

# Charity logos for sale

**A** Food Commission study of food products displaying the names or logos of health charities and medical associations has found considerable cause for concern.

Some charities let their logos appear on foods of doubtful nutritional benefit, yet give the impression that the foods are protective against cancer or heart disease. The British Heart Foundation logo appears on Tetley tea bags alongside claims for the heart-health benefits of drinking Tetley tea. Yet the links between tea and heart health have not yet been scientifically proven, and the scientific evidence that does exist points to antioxidant benefits from *green* tea. The British Heart Foundation says that although its name and logo appear on tea, this should not be taken as a health endorsement, and the charity does not recommend drinking tea to improve heart health. Yet the combination of heart logos, heart-health claims and the charity's logo gives a strong impression that Tetley tea is beneficial for the heart.

Some charities allow their logo to appear on a food product simply because the food company has donated money to their cause, yet the logos are used to make an implicit health claim for the product. For instance, the World Heart Federation's name and logo

appears prominently on Kellogg's Bran Flakes and Fruit'n Fibre. Yet there is no statement to tell customers that the relationship between the company and the charity is purely financial. The impression is that the World Heart Federation is encouraging people to eat Kellogg's Bran Flakes, for the good of their hearts. Although the World Heart Federation recommends eating increased amounts of fruit and vegetables, and some wholegrain cereals, it doesn't recommend Bran Flakes or Fruit'n Fibre or any bran-enriched foods. The World Heart Federation says that this logo scheme is not a product endorsement.

In almost every case, the health charities and medical associations fail to use their influence to promote foods that would offer greater health benefits to consumers. The British Dental Association, for instance, helps to promote Ribena ToothKind but not milk or water. The carton even carries the statement 'The only drink accredited by the British Dental Association'. The National Osteoporosis Society's logo appears on Müller Crunch Corner yogurts. Calcium-rich yogurt is only a part of this product which also includes a big helping of sugars and other ingredients. Yet less sugary fruit yogurts and plain yogurts do not carry the National Osteoporosis Society logo. Are these medical associations doing the very best job they can to promote better health? We think not.

We found that health charities and medical associations frequently help food companies to make *exclusive* claims about the health benefits of branded products, even though equivalent (usually cheaper) products are available. The Family

Heart Association logo, for instance, appears on packets of Quaker Oats alongside heart-health claims for the product. The packets do not carry any indication that the relationship between the charity and the company is an exclusive contract that restricts the Family Heart Association from promoting other oat products. What should a consumer understand? That other, less expensive, oats aren't as good for their heart as Quaker oats?

Most charities know that people on a low-income are most likely to suffer from serious

## Slipping between the regulatory cracks

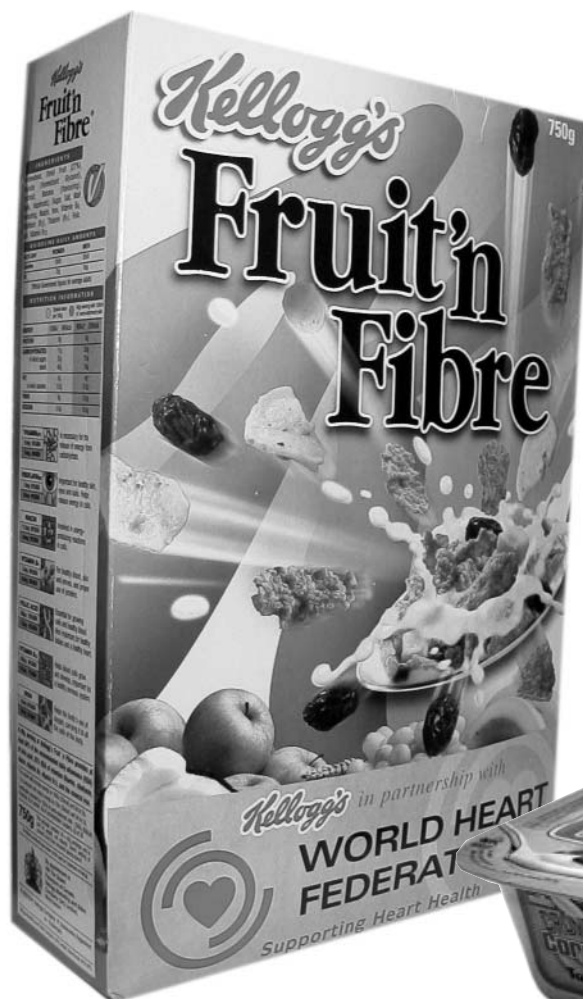
Two national reviews of food labelling and logo schemes are underway, organised by the Food Standards Agency as part of its Labelling Action Plan. One looks at farming assurance schemes (e.g. Freedom Foods and the Little Red Tractor logo). The other examines voluntary labelling schemes in supermarkets (e.g. terms such as 'suitable for vegetarians' and 'fair trade'). Logos and endorsements by health charities and medical associations are generally understood to fall under the remit of the Joint Health Claims Initiative – a body set up by the consumer group Sustain in partnership with the industry's Food and Drink Federation and the Local Authority Coordinating Body on Food and Trading Standards. However, our enquiries show that neither the FSA nor the JHCI are assessing logos of health charities and medical associations when they appear on food products. These logo schemes have slipped between the regulatory cracks, despite the strong and sometimes misleading health claims that they are associated with.



The British Heart Foundation logo appears on Tetley tea bags alongside claims for the heart-health benefits of drinking Tetley tea. Tetley claim that their tea is a 'rich source of antioxidants' which form 'an important part of a healthy diet'. A better source of antioxidants might be fresh fruit and veg, but with the help of the BHF logo Tetley seems to imply that a cup of tea will do instead.

Although they have allowed the use of their logo, the BHF does not recommend drinking tea to improve heart health.

# CHECKOUT



The World Heart Federation says its logo is not a product endorsement. Some might beg to differ.

This Müller Crunch Corner yogurt carries the logo of The National Osteoporosis Society and claims that it is 'bone friendly'. All yogurts are calcium-rich – so why choose to endorse a product that is an estimated 18% sugar?



diet-related diseases, and would benefit most from healthy-eating advice. However, in almost every case we examined, the logos of health charities and medical associations appear on food or drink products that are significantly more expensive than equivalent food or drink products available in the same shops. Pressed fruit juices, which the British Dietetic Association helps to promote in Safeway and Marks & Spencer, cost between 1.5 and 5.4 times as much as other pure fruit juices (note: the BDA receives no fee for this logo use).

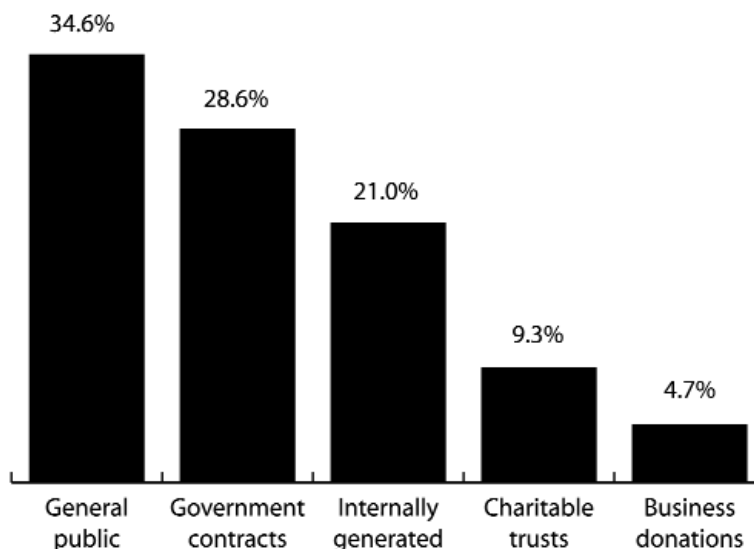
A premium extra virgin olive oil from the manufacturer Karyatis carries the Cancer Research Campaign logo and dietary advice, and costs nearly ten times as much as other olive and sunflower oils available in the same shop (Waitrose). Do these organisations really mean to give the impression that healthy eating costs up to five or ten times as much? Is this the best use of their good names?

■ To purchase a copy of the full survey – 'Cause or Compromise? Do marketing partnerships compromise public health?' – please send payment of £75.00 to the Food Commission at 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF.

## Donations 'with strings attached'

Numerous marketing benefits can accrue to a company that enters into a marketing partnership with a health charity or medical association. These include enhanced brand image, improved customer loyalty and the opportunity to charge extra for the product. Associations with good causes can also shield companies from adverse criticism. Marketing partnerships between food companies and health charities or medical associations constitute charitable giving 'with strings attached'. The company expects to see tangible marketing benefits in return for their charitable 'investment'.

## Principle sources of donated income for the UK voluntary sector in 1999-2000 (total: £14.55 billion)



Companies in the UK have a poor record of giving money to charity. As the chart shows, only 4.7% of charitable income is from business donations. The UK's National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has called for the government to set a target for companies to give 1% of their profits to charities and other not-for-profit organisations – equivalent to the average level achieved in the US, and worth £1.25 billion a year. Currently, the average company donation in the UK is just 0.2% of profits. This is one reason why health charities and medical associations turn to marketing partnerships to boost their flagging incomes.

■ Source: The Guardian 2001 and the Directory for Social Change