

Food and drink / Office of Science and Technology.

Contributors

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KEY Points

PROGRESS THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

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FOOD AND DRINK

INFORMATION SERVICE

17 JUL 1995

Wellcome Centre for Medical Science

THE SECTOR

Food and drink production represents the largest manufacturing sector in the UK economy. The industry adds value at each of the major stages in the supply chain. Food and drink companies are among the largest UK exporters (£8.2bn in 1993). The industry makes an essential contribution not only to UK wealth creation but also to the quality of life in the United Kingdom.

THE FUTURE

The Panel paints a picture of the future in which increased investment must be used to apply the UK's strong R and D on food and drink to keep the UK in the first division of food manufacture. Advances in food science and technology - for example, in genetic modification of plants and animals and in assessment of consumer tastes - will be rapidly seized upon by our competitors. Our great strength in food science and technology should be applied fully by research councils and Government departments working closely with each other and with industry and academia.

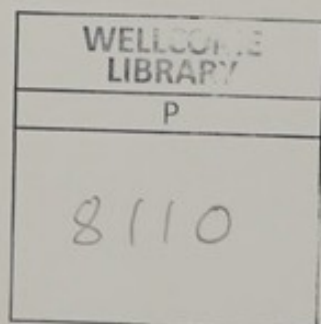
RECOMMENDATIONS

The UK Technology Foresight Panel on Food and Drink has focused on science and technology priorities and infrastructural change:

Science and Technology Priorities

The Panel has identified the following science and technology priorities:

- Exploiting the growing capability of biotechnology to modify the properties of agricultural products.
- Genetics and molecular biology of raw materials.
- Links between diet and health.
- Materials and machines: in particular, assessing ways in which the quality of food materials changes during processing.
- Microbiological, chemical and physical safety of food and drink.
- Multivariate modelling, data bases and information networks applied to food production systems.
- Sensory perceptions of product quality.
- Psychology of consumer choice.



TECHNOLOGY Foresight



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Infrastructural Priorities

- A review of how best to transfer technology to SMEs.
- Collaborative planning and management of research on food science and technology by research councils and Government departments.
- More multidisciplinary research, for example, on diet and health.

FORWARD WITH FORESIGHT

The Technology Foresight Panel on Food and Drink recommends the following action to drive forward the implementation of its recommendations:

To Promote the Transfer of Technology:

- The **transfer of technology, particularly to small and medium-sized manufacturing enterprises**, is critical to the continued success of this sector. While the sector is well served by existing research associations, additional structures and procedures are required.

The **Office of Science and Technology** should review possible new mechanisms for technology and information transfer in consultation with other Government departments and other organisations, taking particular account of the need to increase Government funding for precompetitive work and technology transfer.

To Promote Multidisciplinary Research and Strengthen the Application of UK R & D on Food and Drink:

- **Collaborative planning and management of research** on food science and technology by research councils (BBSRC, EPSRC, MRC and ESRC) and Government departments (MAFF, DTI, DH, Scottish Office and DANI), and the promotion of multidisciplinary research, would greatly help the effective use of funds.

Research councils and Government departments should report jointly on the implementation of the Panel's main findings to the Chief Scientific Adviser to the Government within 9 months of publication of the Panel's report.

TECHNOLOGY FORESIGHT PROGRAMME

The purpose of the Technology Foresight Programme is to help business people, engineers and scientists become better informed about each other's efforts. It is bringing these communities together in networks - looking forward in partnership - which will help to identify emerging opportunities in markets and technologies. The Programme will also help to ensure that resources are used to best effect in support of wealth creation and improving the quality of life. The results of Foresight will inform decisions on spending by Government and industry. Foresight findings are available to small and medium sized enterprises which may not have the resources to undertake Foresight work on their own account.

The Technology Foresight Programme is co-ordinated by the Office of Science and Technology (part of the Cabinet Office). Foresight panels have been working in each of the following 15 sectors:

Agriculture, Natural Resources & Environment	Health & Life Sciences
Chemicals	IT & Electronics
Communications	Leisure & Learning
Construction	Manufacturing, Production & Business Processes
Defence & Aerospace	Materials
Energy	Retail & Distribution
Financial Services	Transport
Food & Drink	

Summary leaflets (like this one) are available for each sector. Copies of these documents are available from the Office of Science and Technology, Albany House, 84-86 Petty France, London, SW1H 9ST (Fax: 0171-271-2015). Full reports for each sector are available from Her Majesty's Stationery Office.