

SANDWICHES MISLEADINGLY LABELLED
(Paper prepared by Eva Lewis, Consumer Panel Member, July 1995)

INTRODUCTION

1. An article in “the times” recently stated that a survey of sandwiches on retail sale in eight counties in the West Country found that more than half were misleadingly labelled. The survey was conducted by local trading standards officers. A copy of the article is provided at annex a for the panels information
2. The survey reports that 221 sandwiches included in the survey, 114 were incorrectly and misleadingly labelled. Examples of misleading labels included pork shoulder described as ham and reconstituted meat mixed with cereal being described as beef. Other labels failed to indicate added water content, protein and milk or vegetable protein.
3. The policy objectives published by MAFF acknowledge that our food law exists to protect the public. Particular reference is made to ensuring that consumers have the necessary information they need to choose a healthy and nutritious diet and that the consumer be protected against deception. Both these policy objectives are at issue as a result of this survey, it is not that the law may be inadequate, but that its enforcement should be rigorously applied throughout the country.

CONSUMER CONCERNS

4. Sandwiches are a principle lunchtime food for a high proportion of the UK workforce. It is important that the consumers are given correct information on which to base the purchasing and dietary decisions.
5. The incidence of misleading labelled sandwiches found in the survey reported in “The Times” is unacceptable.

ISSUES

6. The panel is asked to consider the issues involved in this matter and advise the Minister of consumers concerns arising from it. The findings are sufficiently alarming for the panel to consider recommending to the minister that central government work closely with the enforcement authorities throughout the country to assess the full extent of the problem and ensure effective action is taken to deal with it

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