

## Book Reviews

**The Additives Guide.** By Dr C. C. Hughes. John Wiley, Chichester, 1987. 146 pp. £5.95. ISBN 0471-91507-6.

There have been many popular books in recent years appearing on the shelves of bookshops and 'health food' shops in the United Kingdom dealing with food additives. They often suggest that many people would benefit from a diet free of these substances. In many cases so much information is given that the average consumer is left with a difficult choice—avoid eating any additives or ignore the book. Anyone connected with the food industry in the United Kingdom during this time has discovered that many consumers take the first option without really understanding the lack of scientific validity in their action.

The scientist and technologist wishing to help try to inform the consumer in a rational manner is faced with a problem. It is often difficult to counter the generalisations without substantial knowledge of the subject. Most books on additives are too specialised to be of much use to anyone wanting a brief summary. This new paperback book will help solve this problem.

The book has a brief introduction which provides a basic classification of additives and a short chapter detailing some of the health risks commonly associated with food additives. The vast bulk of the book, though, is given over to an alphabetical list incorporating both substances used as additives and categories of additives. The author has used lists of additives from European Community (EC) countries, Australia, Canada and the USA. Most of the entries provide information as to the source of an additive, its main value to the food industry, technical problems involving its use, and indications of any toxicological problems and any specific legislative points.

The amount of information given in each entry varies according to the available data. This may cause some problems to readers wishing to reassure themselves on a particular substance—does a brief entry with no details of any toxicological hazard mean that none are known or simply that the author failed to study that substance fully? The legislative status of compounds is also difficult. Some details are given but, obviously because of the constantly changing requirements, these are brief and in many cases tend to be confusing rather than helpful. On the positive side, by using lists of substances permitted in a number of countries, an extensive list has been developed. Thus within the EC countries there are as yet no agreed permitted lists of flavouring substances or enzymes. However, this book includes many common examples of these additives.

The book is certainly a useful contribution to the personal library of anyone in the food industry. People who have avoided buying the more controversial books can be reassured that by buying this publication they will not be helping those they might see as spreading confusion in this area.

**David Jukes**

**Toxicological Evaluation of Certain Food Additives and Contaminants.** WHO Food Additives Series No. 20: Prepared by the 29th Meeting of JECFA. WHO Food Additives Series No. 21: Prepared by the 30th Meeting of JECFA. IPCS, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1987. 282 pp. £19.50 (for each volume). ISBN 0-521-34347X (No. 20). ISBN 0-521-359856 (No. 21).

The 29th meeting of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) was held in Geneva in June 1985, and the 30th meeting in June 1986. The publication of these books by the Cambridge University Press represents a new attempt by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to ensure that the monographs contained within them become more widely known and available. Previously, similar monographs have only been available on request to the WHO. In addition to these books, the WHO publishes specifications of the additives and full meeting reports.

The books contain monographs which review the recent research conducted into a particular compound. The reason for the review is stated and followed by extracted data relating to the biochemistry of the substance and toxicological studies. The comments of JECFA are then given along with their evaluation. This evaluation usually takes the form of an assessment of the level causing no toxicological effect in particular animals and, based on this, an evaluation of the acceptable daily intake (ADI) for