

are few errors. The revisions to the first edition have improved the quality of the book markedly and it is strongly recommended for all scientists and technologists interested in fatty foods.

M. H. Gordon

The Human Food Chain. Edited by C. R. W. Spedding. Elsevier Applied Science Publishers, London, 1989. xv + 330 pp. ISBN 1-85166-317-7. Price: £47.00.

This is not only a report of a three-day conference but also the conclusions of four working parties after a period of 18 months discussion.

Each section starts with the conclusions of the working party, followed by several contributions from speakers from various academic and research centres and from industry and a summary of the discussion.

The conference was (most appropriately) organised at Reading University, which is a major centre of food studies with its well-known Departments of Agriculture, Agricultural Economics and Management, Food Science and Technology and Centre for Agricultural Strategy.

The first theme and the subject of the working party was 'Public Perception and Understanding'—one well illustrated these days by magazines, television programmes and the projection of food topics into the daily news headlines.

The public receives most of its knowledge about food from headlines but fundamental education is slow. 'Calories make you fat and energy is a mark of vigour and health' is an illustrative belief.

This, of course, is inevitable since a proper understanding of current food issues (consider food additives and irradiation) demands some knowledge, however basic, of physiology and chemistry—indeed, it is not all that easy to understand food labels without some basic knowledge of science.

Similarly, conclusions from complex biological experiments and human trials call for skills learned from years of experience rather than the facile dicta of the journalist. As an example, publicity has been achieved for that particularly ill-informed opinion that 'the Government' is not interested in those vitamins not quantified in UK RDA tables—when the new tables come out will that mean that 'the Government' has done a U-turn?

The working party points out that the budget of the Health Education Council in 1986 was £30.5 million, of which only £9.5 million was spent on food. That is a large proportion when so many other topics are involved in the maintenance of health.

The next section is 'Implications for Education'—meaning the formal education of practitioners in the various parts of the food field. This deals with agriculture, the food industry, catering and schools, with special reference to infant and geriatric feeding. Operators in these different areas are largely ignorant of other sectors. Incidentally, catering employs 10% of the UK workforce and is growing at the rate of 2.7% per annum.

The third theme is 'Implications for Technology—Priorities for R and D', which is discussed under five of the traditional eight commodity areas.

The fourth theme is entitled 'Implications for Policy' and covers international trade—EEC, CAP, GATT, competition and public and policy implications.

This is a thoughtful and thought-provoking book and the organisers of the conference are to be congratulated on their methodology and results. It is highly recommended to all involved in the food net despite the price (15 p per page!).

A. E. Bender