

**Now is the time to remember that food actually comes from the farm,
not the supermarket**

The myth of the mega retailers as trusted shops is being blown apart, giving farm shops the authenticity crown. Despite the advertising campaigns and celebrity chef endorsements, assurances the supermarkets have given us are being exposed as phoney veneers. We are questioning, for example, the volumes of 'filler' in processed food, spurious sourcing from across the globe, length and complexity of supply chains, policies to manufacture in the cheapest way with disregard for so many principles, non-disclosure of the facts to the consumer (effectively lying)... the list goes on.

Please don't be fooled - supermarkets are highly sophisticated corporations. There are buyers for each food category, whose job is to specifically know about the production costs of food, and negotiate the best procurement contract for their masters. For example, everyone in the industry knows the beef price has spiked (due to commodity prices) and yet in real terms supermarket procurement has forced the price of processed (value-added !) dishes down to help price cutting campaigns. Such pressure on the supply chain has led to questionable practices and the supermarkets are complicit, at the very least having made quality assurance claims, they have failed to ask the right questions. It seems that a Nelsonian blind eye has been used when it suits. For example, it is easy to make UK farmers provide evidence of each specific field a potato comes from, for marketing purposes, but inconvenient to ask which stable beef has come from when supermarkets want to make the cheapest food to tempt consumers. Without a genuine cultural change within supermarkets, the relentless pursuit of profit means that questions on quality won't get asked, even when clear flags are raised such as changing commodity prices. This has returned the title of trust to those who trade for profit, but not at all costs, such as the farmer and the farm shop.

We have also been confused into thinking that the value of our food is only about price, rather than a combination of its quality and the price we pay for it. Supermarkets have sort to redefine 'value' as the cheapest. In reality buying from a farm shop, market or independent, gives to consumer the ability to interrogate the provenance directly; get

advice on and decide for themselves what is the best value; learn about ways to make the food go further; and put inspiration and fun back into food shopping.

Farm Shops should have no qualms about kicking the supermarkets whilst they are down. They have no problem in sticking the boot into farmers... think of all huge budgets thrown at advertising supermarkets as custodians for the stereotypical farmer; slogans saying 'we only use 100% British and Irish beef', happy cows, clean wellies and smiley rural-types on supermarket products... How patronising does that feel to a real farmer, who's been stitched on a pricing contract or legged over in his farm shop by a supermarket price war?

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