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Plummeting mineral levels suggest nutritional crisis in UK

By Anthony Fletcher

03/02/2006 - **The plummeting mineral content of milk, meat and vegetables over the past 60 years will have grave consequences for the future health of the UK, according to a shocking food analysis.**

Dr David Thomas, a primary healthcare practitioner and independent researcher, made a comparison of government tables published in 1940, and again in 2002.

His conclusions, which were published by the Food Commission this month, make alarming reading.

For example, the iron content in 15 different varieties of meat had decreased on average by 47 per cent, with some products showing a fall as high as 80 per cent, while the iron content of milk had dropped by over 60 per cent.

Copper and magnesium, essential for [enzyme](#) functioning, also showed losses in meat products. Magnesium levels have typically fallen by 10 per cent while copper levels have fallen by 60 per cent.

Dairy foods have experienced a 90 per cent fall in copper, while the calcium loss in high-value Parmesan cheese was an extraordinary 70 per cent, implying a considerable dilution of the original highly concentrated recipe.

"Processed and manufactured food has resulted in increasingly denatured products, with no micronutrients," Thomas told **FoodNavigator**. *"As time has gone on, things have got lost."*

"With the current obesity crisis, lo and behold; people are beginning to realise that good food makes good sense."

But the default meal for many children remains a plate of rendered meat, chips and Coke.

"We're beginning to see what was once called adult onset diabetes in kids, and an increase in asthma and hyperactivity," said Thomas. *"All these have [nutritional](#) links. When I see chronic illnesses such as these, I always think it is amazing what a difference changing diets can do but why shouldn't it be like this in the first place?"*

Intensive farming on exhausted land appears to be one likely

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major cause of the decline in the nutritional quality of the food, along with the selection of varieties for qualities other than nutrition. Thomas points out that the food industry is also under intense pressure to produce cheaper food, instead of nutrient-dense food.

"Why is it that you have to eat four carrots to get the same amount of magnesium as you would have done in 1940?" he asks.

The UK's Food Standards Agency (FSA), which publishes The Composition of Food, points out that the use the government tables to make historical comparisons could be problematic. It said in a statement that any differences over time could be due to a wide variety of factors, including variety and breed, animal husbandry, storage conditions as well as differences in analytical methodology.

But statistics clearly show that there is something seriously wrong with levels of nutritional awareness in Europe. The European Commission says that 14 million Europeans are now [obese](#) or overweight, of which more than 3 million are children.

"We've lost the plot," insists Thomas. "Until people wake up to this situation, then things will get worse."

Food, says Thomas, has to be grown well in order for it to be micronutrient dense. This concept should inform government policies across Europe.

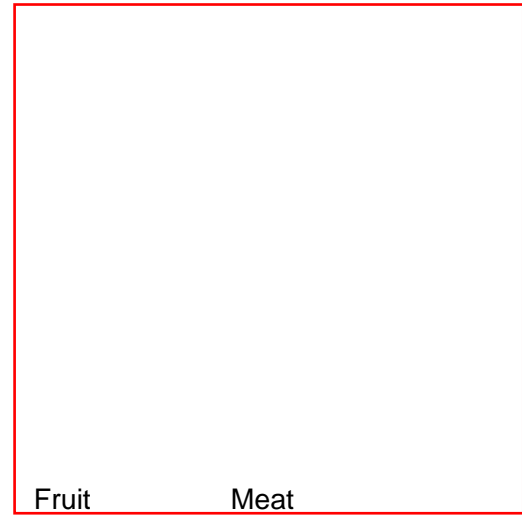
"But the only people interested in this at the moment seem to be celebrities," he added.

Summary of Changes in the Mineral Content of Vegetables, Fruit and Meat Between 1940 and 1991

Year of Analysis	Mineral	Vegetables (27 Varieties)	Fruit (17 Varieties)	Meat (10 Cuts)
1940	Sodium			
1991	(Na)	Less 49%	Less 29%	Less 30%
1940	Potassium			
1991	(K)	Less 16%	Less 19%	Less 16%
1940	Phosphorous			
1991	(P)	Plus 9%	Plus 2%	Less 28%
1940	Magnesium			
1991	(Mg)	Less 24%	Less 16%	Less 10%
1940	Calcium			
1991	(Ca)	Less 46%	Less 16%	Less 41%
1940	Iron			
1991	(Fe)	Less 27%	Less 24%	Less 54%
1940	Copper			
1991	(Cu)	Less 76%	Less 20%	Less 24%

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