Education and Responsibility of Modern Food Technologists

E. J. Rolfe
National College of Food Technology, University of Reading, Weybridge, Surrey, UK

ABSTRACT

It is only in comparatively recent years that food science and technology has received acceptance as a discipline and a profession, but already it is recognised educationally by University departments and other centres of higher education throughout the UK. In addition the discipline is supported by an extensive range of journals in which the results of original investigations are reported.

The education of the food technologist must prepare him to serve in the food industry, which in fact is a complex of industries applying different processes to a diverse range of commodities. He is required to approach his work from a position of knowledge and understanding, coupled with experience. The educational curriculum must be designed around such requirements.

Probably more than half the food consumed in the UK is processed or manufactured, and this places a heavy burden on the industry to ensure the health and well-being of the population. The foods produced must not only be attractive and palatable, but those hidden qualities of wholesomeness, nutritive value and composition must be maintained. Food technologists, through their professional institute, the IFST, have recognised their responsibility in these matters in two ways. Firstly they have introduced a Code of Professional Conduct which includes guidelines for the food technologist regarding both his responsibility for wholesomeness of food and his integrity towards the profession.

Secondly the Institute has introduced jointly with the Royal Institute of Chemistry and the Institute of Biology the qualification of Master of Food Control (MFC) which certifies that the holder has a good
knowledge of the principles of the technical control of food manufacture and its application to sectors of the food industry.

INTRODUCTION

The terms food technology and food science are often used almost as equivalents but many of those most directly concerned believe there is a distinction. Many definitions have been proposed in an attempt to identify these two separate aspects of food studies, e.g.

Food Science is the study of the nature and characteristics of food by means of an integrated approach using the basic scientific disciplines, e.g. chemistry, biochemistry, biology and physics.

Food Technology is the application of food science and other relevant disciplines, e.g. engineering and physics, to the processing and distribution of foodstuffs.

Inevitably there are areas of study which can be placed in either category, and in practice food technology is an essential ingredient of courses in Food Science and vice versa.

The education of Food Technologists, certainly those at the National College of Food Technology, is aimed at preparing students for a career in the food industry. A substantial proportion of food scientists also are choosing careers in the food industry as technologists.

This paper presents some thoughts concerning the education and responsibility of Modern Food Technologists in the food industry.

EDUCATION

Only in recent years has food science and food technology received acceptance as a discipline and a profession, but it is now recognised by universities through the introduction of departments and by the Royal Society. Perhaps the three significant milestones leading to the firm establishment of the discipline are:

1. The introduction of systematic courses in Food Science at the Low Temperature Research Station (LTRS) Cambridge in the summers of 1948 and 1951. Following numerous requests for publication of the papers presented at the two courses,