Dear Members of the Voice of Young Science Network

Thank you for taking the time to write with your concerns regarding the scientific basis for the policy decisions that we make as a business.

We appreciate the fact that you have supplied further information relating to the scientific evidence surrounding a number of our own-brand policies. When developing a policy we always consider the scientific evidence. However, this cannot be the only criteria on which policies are based.

Often, when papers are published, there are conflicting opinions in circulation or conflicting findings submitted at the same time and, due to the nature of some of these studies, we have to make decisions long before the evidence is clear.

As you are aware, science only provides us with the most accurate information available at that time and scientific opinion can change over time due to further research. We have a responsibility to our customers to ensure that products are not only safe but also deliver in terms of quality and their expectations of The Co-operative as a brand.

When developing a policy, we consider a wide range of factors including customer and member feedback, commercial factors, supplier capability, the rest of the retail market, external stakeholders’ views and scientific opinion as well. Once we have established a policy, we would need to consider the same criteria again in order to change it and, in all the cases mentioned, none of the factors support a change of policy at this time.
As a responsible retailer, we have not, at any point, intended to make an implicit or explicit claim that any of these additives or ingredients are in any way dangerous and, in fact, welcome the opportunity to have clear, open and honest discussions with customers on food matters.

We regularly keep all policies under review and, if at any point in the future the time became right for us to change these policies, then we would consider it through the clearly defined internal policy process we have.

We hope this letter goes some way to explaining the process we undertake in developing policies. If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Steve Murrells
Chief Executive, The Co-operative Food