

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

“A knowledge of the chemical composition of foods is the first essential in the dietary treatment of disease or in any quantitative study of human nutrition”
(McCance & Widdowson, 1940).

- 1.1.1** This sixth summary edition of the UK food composition tables extends and updates a series which began with the vision of R A McCance and E M Widdowson in the 1930s, under the auspices of the Medical Research Council. Following publication of the fourth edition of McCance and Widdowson’s *The Composition of Foods* in 1978, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) took on the responsibility for maintaining and updating the official tables of food composition in the United Kingdom. In 1987, the Ministry joined with the Royal Society of Chemistry to begin production of a computerised UK National Nutrient Databank from which a number of detailed supplements (Table 1) and the fifth edition of *The Composition of Foods* (Holland *et al.*, 1991) were produced. Responsibility for data compilation returned to MAFF in 1997 and a detailed supplement on the fatty acid composition of foods was published in 1998 (MAFF, 1998). Responsibility for the maintenance of the UK National Nutrient Databank transferred to the Food Standards Agency on its establishment in April 2000. The data for this sixth summary edition were compiled, under contract, by the Institute of Food Research.
- 1.1.2** This sixth summary edition is intended to be a convenient book which includes in one volume the most recent values for a range of commonly-consumed foods. As such, it comprises a sub-set of published and new data with the range of both foods and nutrients being limited. It replaces the fifth edition, but not the detailed supplements (Table 1), which make up the UK National Nutrient Databank.
- 1.1.3** Computer-readable files of the data for most of the supplements and the fifth and sixth editions are available. Details can be obtained from the Food Standards Agency.
- 1.1.4** Now that the series of supplements is complete, a comprehensive integrated dataset will be produced. However, prior to this, it was decided to publish this summary edition in response to the widely expressed need for a convenient book which includes in one volume the most recent nutrient values for the whole range of common foods.

Table 1 *Supplements to 'The Composition of Foods'*

<i>Amino Acids and Fatty Acids</i>	Paul <i>et al.</i> , 1980
<i>Immigrant Foods</i>	Tan <i>et al.</i> , 1985
<i>Cereals and Cereal Products</i>	Holland <i>et al.</i> , 1988
<i>Milk Products and Eggs</i>	Holland <i>et al.</i> , 1989
<i>Vegetables, Herbs and Spices</i>	Holland <i>et al.</i> , 1991
<i>Fruit and Nuts</i>	Holland <i>et al.</i> , 1992
<i>Vegetable Dishes</i>	Holland <i>et al.</i> , 1992
<i>Fish and Fish Products</i>	Holland <i>et al.</i> , 1993
<i>Miscellaneous Foods</i>	Chan <i>et al.</i> , 1994
<i>Meat, Poultry and Game</i>	Chan <i>et al.</i> , 1995
<i>Meat Products and Dishes</i>	Chan <i>et al.</i> , 1996
<i>Fatty Acids</i>	MAFF, 1998

1.2 Sources of data and methods of evaluation

- 1.2.1** It is essential that food composition tables are regularly updated for a number of reasons. Since the fifth summary edition was published, many new fresh and manufactured foods have become familiar items in our shops, and values for these have been included wherever possible. In addition, the nutritional value of many of the more traditional foods has changed. This can happen when there are new varieties or new sources of supply for the raw materials; with new farming practices which can affect the nutritional value of both plant and animal products; with new manufacturing practices including changes in the type and amounts of ingredients (including reductions in the amount of fat, sugar and salt added or new fortification practices); and with new methods of preparation and cooking in the home.
- 1.2.2** To ensure that the UK food composition tables could continue to have as wide a coverage and be as up to date as possible, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) decided in the early 1980s to set up a rolling programme of food analysis. Responsibility for this programme transferred to the Food Standards Agency on its establishment in April 2000. The analytical reports from recent studies (1990 onwards) are available from the Food Standards Agency library. (A small charge will be made to cover copying and postage.) A few reports are available on the Food Standards Agency website (www.food.gov.uk). These reports comprise raw laboratory data and have not been evaluated to the same extent as data incorporated into *The Composition of Foods*.
- 1.2.3** Most of the values included in these Tables have been taken from the detailed supplements, themselves mainly derived from MAFF's series of analytical studies. This edition also includes new, and previously unpublished, analytical data for a number of key foods, particularly cereals and cereal products, and milk and milk products. Further details are given in the introduction to each food group. In