

# The Decade of Change

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"The Organic Change" is the theme of my paper today. As Sales and Marketing Director of the William Price Group, I was very much involved with the launch of a premium sliced organic and GM free loaf by Harvestime. In fact the bakery group I represent has been producing for the organic sector since 1989.

The 800g loaf launched in July 1999 was aimed at the mainstream market. Until recently, organics was seen as a niche product, wholesome and ethically correct, but of inconsistent quality and with something of a hippy image. The industry viewed organics as being mainly short production runs, high ingredient costs and very little, if any, profits.

The market has, however, undergone a dramatic change over the past two years or so. Changes being driven by consumers, food scares, particularly BSE and GM food worries. The overwhelming message from 86% of consumers was that following BSE, genetically modified foods are next in line as the key concern. Research shows that 81% of consumers feel that food producers should be spending more on genetics than on genetic engineering.

Supermarkets were responding to consumer concerns by clearing products with GMO's from their shelves.

Before launching its premium organic, Harvestime asked consumers what key attributes they looked for in a premium product. These were: A traditional loaf, taste/flavour, handmade, usable slices, flexible, dressed/or flavoured and good for you.

In the premium sector the customer will only pay if the product is the same quality every time, delivers superior taste and is significantly different to economy and standard breads.

Harvestime is successful because it has targeted consumer demands and is now the largest baker in the UK, with retail sales of organics set to reach £20 million in 2000.