

023/001



**YOUR FOOD IN  
WAR-TIME**

**PUBLIC INFORMATION  
LEAFLET NO. 4**

Read this and  
keep it carefully.  
You may need it.

Issued from the Lord Privy Seal's Office July, 1939

## YOUR FOOD IN WAR-TIME

You know that our country is dependent to a very large extent on supplies of food from overseas. More than 20 million tons are brought into our ports from all parts of the world in the course of a year. Our defence plans must therefore provide for the protection of our trade routes by which these supplies reach us, for reserves of food here and for the fair distribution of supplies, both home and imported, as they become available.

### WHAT THE GOVERNMENT HAVE DONE

During the last eighteen months the Government have purchased considerable reserves of essential foodstuffs which are additional to the commercial stocks normally carried. This is one of the precautionary measures which has been taken to build up our resources to meet the conditions of war. In addition, the necessary arrangements have been made to control the supply and distribution of food throughout the country immediately upon the outbreak of hostilities and to bring in such measure of rationing as may be required.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

There are certain ways in which traders and householders can help to strengthen our food position at the present time.

In the ordinary way, the stocks of food in any area are based on the extent of the local demand, or the size of the local population. In war time, the amount of stocks in any area might be affected by air raid damage, or the flow of supplies might be reduced temporarily by transport difficulties.

As an additional precaution against difficulties of this kind, traders will be doing a good service *now* by maintaining, and if possible increasing, their stocks, so far as they can. You, too, as an ordinary householder, will be doing a good service if you can manage to get in some extra stores of food that will keep. These will be a stand-by against an emergency. Of course, there are many of us who cannot do this, but those who can will find, if a strain is put at any time upon local supplies, that such reserves will not only be a convenience to themselves but will help their neighbours. By drawing on these reserves instead of making demands on the shops at such a time, they would leave the stocks available for the use of those who have not been able to put anything by.

For those who have the means, a suitable amount of foodstuffs to lay by would be the quantity that they ordinarily use in one week. The following are suggested as articles of food suitable for householder's storage:—

Meat and fish in cans or glass jars; flour; suet; canned or dried milk; sugar; tea; cocoa; plain biscuits.

When you have laid in your store, you should draw on it regularly for day to day use, replacing what you use by new purchases, so that the stock in your cupboard is constantly being changed. Flour and suet in particular should be replaced frequently. You may find it helpful to label the articles with the date of purchase.

Any such reserves should be bought before an emergency arises. To try to buy extra quantities when an emergency is upon us, would be unfair to others.

### FOOD SUPPLIES FOR EVACUATION

The Government evacuation scheme, of which you have already been told, will mean a considerable shift of population from the more vulnerable areas to safer areas. This will lead to additional demands on shops in the reception areas. Traders have been asked to have plans in readiness for increasing the supplies in shops in reception areas to meet the needs of the increased population. It would, however, take a day or two for these plans to be put into full operation.

The Government are, therefore, providing emergency supplies for children and others travelling under the official evacuation scheme. These supplies would be issued to them on their arrival in their new areas and would be sufficient for two days. Those who receive them will be asked not to make any purchases, other than small ones, in the local shops during those two days.

Those making their own arrangements to travel, should take food with them sufficient for two days, and should buy in advance, as part of their arrangements, the non-perishable food which they would require. As already said, anyone who, in time of emergency, buys more than normal quantities, would be doing harm, as such buying must draw on stocks which should be available for others.

### NATIONAL HOUSEKEEPING IN WAR TIME

#### CENTRAL CONTROL

Should war come, the Government would take over responsibility for obtaining the main food supplies for the country, and for distributing them through all the stages down to the consumer. This would ensure that every precaution could be taken against war time risks. The prices of food would be controlled and supplies directed wherever they were needed.

For this purpose, the existing organisation of the food trades would be used so far as possible, and all food traders—importers, manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers—would work under the direction of a Ministry of Food. The Ministry would act for the benefit of the country as a whole and be assisted by representatives of the various trades.

#### LOCAL DISTRIBUTION

In each area food control would be in the hands of a local committee, which would be set up at the outbreak of war. The membership of these committees would be chosen to represent the general body of consumers in the area. It would include a few retail traders who possess a first-hand working knowledge of trading conditions.

The principal duty of these local Food Control Committees would be to look after the interests of consumers. They will also be responsible for supervising retail distribution. Shopkeepers would be licensed to trade by these committees. Ordinarily, all

existing shops would receive these licences. New shops would not be opened unless there was a need for them.

Shopkeepers would be instructed that they must not supply excessive quantities to any of their customers, and powers would be taken to prevent people from buying more than their reasonable share.

Maximum prices would be fixed by the Ministry for each controlled food, and would be shown clearly in the shop windows.

### **RATIONING SCHEME**

Certain foods, soon after the outbreak of a war, would be brought under a rationing scheme similar to that which was introduced during the latter part of the Great War. In the first instance, rationing would be applied to five foodstuffs—butter's meat, bacon and ham, sugar, butter and margarine, and cooking fats. Later, it might be necessary to add other articles.

The object of this scheme is to make certain that foodstuffs are distributed fairly and equally and that everyone is sure of his or her proper share.

Before rationing begins application forms would be sent through the post to every householder, who would be asked to give particulars of everyone living in his home. These forms, when filled in, would be returned to the local food office set up by the local Food Control Committee, which would issue the Ration Books, one for each person.

You would then register at a retail shop of your own choice for each rationed food. This registration is necessary to enable the local committee to know the quantities of rationed foods which each shop would require. There is no need to register with a shop in peace time. It is not advisable to do so.

The Ration Books would have coupons, a certain number for each week. The Ministry would decide how much food each coupon represented, and you would be entitled to buy that amount. In the case of meat, the amount would be expressed in money. Thus, you could choose between buying a larger amount of a cheaper cut, or a smaller amount of a more expensive cut. In the case of other foods, the amount would be by weight.

For children under six years of age, there would be a Child's Ration Book, but the only difference would be that a child would be allowed half the amount of butcher's meat allowed for a grown-up person. On the other hand, the allowance for a heavy worker will give him a larger quantity of meat.

For catering and other institutions, special arrangements will be made.

**These are the plans for our national housekeeping in war time. Like all plans for our civil defence they need your help. In war time there would be no food to waste, but with your care and co-operation we shall have enough.**

Any enquiries about food supplies in war time should be addressed:—  
The Director, Food (Defence Plans) Department, Great Westminster House,  
Horseferry Road, London, S.W.1.