

**REFERENCE RELATING TO THE COMPLETED MERGER BETWEEN
DEANS FOOD GROUP LIMITED AND CLIFFORD KENT HOLDINGS
LIMITED THROUGH NOBLE FOODS LIMITED**

**Notice of extension of inquiry period published pursuant to section
107(2)(c) Enterprise Act 2002 (the Act)**

On 13 September 2006, the Office of Fair Trading, in exercise of its duty under section 22 of the Act, referred to the Competition Commission (CC) the completed merger between Deans Food Group Limited and Clifford Kent Holdings Limited (parent company of Stonegate Farmers Limited) through Noble Foods Limited (the Parties). The period within which the report on this reference was to be prepared and published (the reference period) was due to expire on 27 February 2007.

On 9 February 2007 the group of members of the CC appointed to consider this reference, having consulted the Chairman of the CC, decided to invite comments from the Parties on whether the reference period should be extended under section 39(3) of the Act.

Having taken account of comments received from the Parties, on 15 February 2007 the group decided that the reference period should be extended by eight weeks to 24 April 2007. The CC considers that the complexity of the possible remedy options, including the behavioural remedy proposed by Noble, necessitate significant analysis following consultation to ensure that the group reaches its view on remedies taking a proper account of all the information it has received from the Parties and third parties. It has decided that it is unable to do this without an extension in this case, given the further complication that the merger is completed and that the group has come to a provisional finding of a substantial lessening of competition (SLC) in a number of markets. The group also considers that delays at the start of the inquiry and in the holding of the main party remedy hearing also mean that the original statutory deadline cannot now be met. The group considers that completion of its investigation and the publication of its final report, including any necessary remedy process, would not have been possible within the original reference period.

Barbara Mills.

Barbara Mills
Group Chair
15 February 2007