Plant Polymeric Carbohydrates. Edited by F. Meuser, D. J. Manners and W. Seibel, Royal Society of Chemistry, Cambridge, 1993. xii + 296 pp. Price £52.50. ISBN 0-85186-645-X.

The polymeric carbohydrates obtained from plant sources (most notably starch) are currently undergoing an industrial renaissance as they are recognised as not only bulk, low cost materials but as potential sources of a wide variety of higher cost modifications and derivatives. It should, therefore, come as no surprise to find large sections of the book *Plant Polymeric Carbohydrates* devoted to industrial processes and developments with definite commercial objective and gains. However, this is not to say that this symposium volume contains papers from an industrial viewpoint at the expense of the science; it is only meant to convey the applied nature of the majority of the work within these pages.

Plant Polymeric Carbohydrates has been neatly subdivided into five sections, specifically Biosynthesis and Chemical Structure, Rheology, Nutrition, Industrial Uses and Chemical and Enzymic Conversions. Each section consists of between four and six articles (both applied research and review papers), with contributions from a number of well renowned figures in the field. The volume is well indexed (symposium volume editors take note) and well presented and would be a welcome addition to any library section on plants or carbohydrates, although the lack of an introductory or concluding chapter to bring all of the information together may limit its interest slightly.

The commercial nature of much of the material presented herein would also make *Plant Polymeric Carbohydrates* a worthwhile addition to any industrial library. As with many symposium volumes, we feel that its purchase amongst the scientific community may be limited to those directly involved with plant polymeric carbohydrate research, which is unfortunate, because the high quality of the material presented within these pages deserves a wider audience.

John F. Kennedy
David W. Taylor

Food Intolerance. M. H. Lessof, Chapman & Hall, London, 1992. x + 212 pp. Price £39.95. ISBN 0-412-44850-5.

Consumer safety has become a major issue of the food industry in most countries as consumer awareness has become more acute over recent years. It encompasses a large number of interacting scientific and technological disciplines, such as agriculture, microbiology, chemistry, food technology, processing, handling and packaging to name but a few.

This is the second volume in the *Food Safety Series*, which aims to provide timely publications covering all aspects of this important area. No aspect of food safety has attracted more attention than people's reaction to food itself. Intolerance by some individuals to specific foods or their components is well documented. This can range from true allergies to psychologically based aversions, and is often very difficult to diagnose.

The first section of this book discusses nutrition in the modern world, examining lifestyles, diet and disease, and the connections between the three. A number of sections are involved with the clinical manifestations of food intolerances, such as childhood asthma, infantile eczema, childhood hyperactivity, headaches and migraines, and also outline the symptoms and causes of complaints such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia and obesity.

In order to try and understand the reason for certain intolerances, information on the physiology of gut function is required. This is discussed in some detail and the effects that antigenic foods have on such a system by stimulating immunogenic reactions.

There is a section devoted to food additives dealing with such substances as sulphites, benzoates, aspartame and monosodium glutamate, the latter chemical being responsible for 'Chinese restaurant syndrome'. Another topic discussed in some detail is that of cow's milk allergy. As far as the human baby is concerned cow's milk has inadequate levels of essential fatty acids and nutrients, such as iron and zinc. The main cow's milk allergenes are β-lactoglobulins. A chapter is devoted to gluten sensitive enteropathy (otherwise known as Coeliac disease). This is caused by an antigenic response to specific gliadin sequences in wheat gluten.

Overall, this is an extremely informative and detailed volume providing important information, particularly medically orientated information, on a number of phenomena. It has a detailed glossary and index and is throughly recommended.

John F. Kennedy
Charles J. Knill