

**Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP**

**Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Rt Hon Wes Streeting MP**

To the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care,

On behalf of leading food, health, and children's advocacy groups, as well as experts and royal medical colleges, we are writing to explore how we can collaborate with you to ensure that the food and drink industry plays a stronger role in building a healthier nation.

We welcome the long overdue uprating of the Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL) announced in the Budget. Uprating the levy charges to take account of inflation and announcing a review of both the current thresholds to SDIL and extending it to sugar-sweetened milk and milk substitute drinks are sensible proposals to make a successful policy even more effective.

However, we must not lose sight that preventable obesity and food-related ill health is costing billions each year in healthcare and lost productivity. To improve the nation's health and support economic growth we urge you to go further and faster to create the right financial incentives for companies to improve the food that they sell to us.

The success of SDIL lays the foundation to take a more ambitious approach to address our broken food system, as outlined in the recent report of the Lords' Select Committee on Food, Diet and Obesity.

Voluntary reformulation programmes for sugar, salt and calories are not proving effective enough, achieving only a 3.5% reduction in sugar levels of key product categories, compared to the mandatory SDIL which has achieved a reduction in total sugar sales of 34.3% between 2015-2020<sup>1</sup>. They are due to expire by the end of 2025, and a replacement will need to be decided well before this date. **We therefore encourage you to use the Comprehensive Spending Review and 2025 Budget process to set out a more ambitious plan to establish further financial incentives for a healthier food industry.**

There is strong evidence which suggests the public wants the government to regulate further. Only 13% of the British public believe food companies will make their food healthier without Government intervention, according to new YouGov polling which surveyed almost 5,000 people<sup>2</sup>. A majority of 68% specifically support an expansion of

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11132159/>

<sup>2</sup> YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 4,943 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 18th - 20th September 2024. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+). Details available on request.



SDIL-type levies to encourage companies to remove unhealthy ingredients from their food if any money raised from companies is invested in children's health.

Evidence shows the potential benefits this would reap for both public health and the wider health of our economy. Modelling data by the Recipe for Change coalition shows that an expanded industry-wide salt and sugar levy could prevent 2 million cases of disease, and provide health gains worth £77.9 billion to society, over 25 years<sup>3</sup>. Measures designed to incentivise reformulation can ensure the foods most available to people, regardless of where they live, are as healthy as they can be.

Building on the success of SDIL, further levies on unhealthy food could also raise billions of pounds in additional revenues for children's health, and are backed by 46 health and food organisations in the [Recipe for Change](#) coalition, alongside leading think tanks. They are also amongst the key recommendations of the Lords' Select Committee report on Food, Diet and Obesity, the National Food Strategy, IPPR and the Times Health Commission. Furthermore, leading food companies and investors are increasingly calling for government intervention<sup>4</sup>.

We strongly encourage you to act on this clear public mandate and make 2025 the year that we accelerate the shift to a healthier food industry, delivering on the government's health and growth missions, and creating the healthiest generation of children.

## **Signatories**

Kath Dalmeny, Chief Executive, Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming

Katharine Jenner, Director, Obesity Health Alliance

Anna Taylor, Executive Director, Food Foundation

Dr Charmaine Griffiths, Chief Executive, British Heart Foundation

Professor Graham MacGregor, Chairman, Action on Salt and Sugar

Alison Corfield, Director of Social Impact and Sustainability, Jamie Oliver Group

James Toop, Chief Executive, Bite Back

Lauren Bowes Byatt, Deputy Director – Healthy Life Mission, Nesta

Dr Lindsey MacDonald, Chief Executive, Magic Breakfast

Michael Baber, Director, Health Action Research Group

Colette Marshall, Chief Executive, Diabetes UK

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.sustainweb.org/assets/recipe-for-change-evidence-briefing-1703002243.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/news/lobbying-good-food-businesses-and-investors-share-their-vision-better-food-system>



Professor Maria Bryant, Fix Our Food, University of York

Jonathan Pauling, Chief Executive, Alexandra Rose Charity

Rob Percival, Head of Food Policy, Soil Association

Pamela Healy OBE, Chief Executive, British Liver Trust

Matthew Philpott, Executive Director, Health Equalities Group

Nikita Sinclair, Interim Programme Director – Children's Health and Food, Impact on Urban Health

Rachael Gormley, CEO, World Cancer Research Fund

Eddie Crouch, Chair, British Dental Association

Ansaf Azhar, Policy Lead for Healthy Places, Association of Directors of Public Health

Phil Pyatt, CEO, Blood Pressure UK

Vicky Sibson, Director, First Steps Nutrition Trust

Professor David Strain, Chair, BMA Board of Science Committee

Nilushka Perera, Chief Operating Officer, Best Beginnings

Beckie Lang, Chief Executive, HENRY

Stephanie Slater, Founder/ Chief Executive, School Food Matters

Paul Wright, Public Health and Political Director, Children's Alliance

Prof. Nicola Heslehurst, President, Association for the Study of Obesity

Adele Jones, Executive Director, Sustainable Food Trust

William Roberts, CEO, Royal Society for Public Health

Jessica Sinclair Taylor, Deputy Director, Feedback

Dr Helen Stewart, Officer for Health Improvement, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

Prof. Amelia Lake, Associate Director of Fuse, The Centre for Translational Research in Public Health

Dr Nigel Carter OBE, CEO, Oral Health Foundation

Kathy Lewis, Chair, The Caroline Walker Trust

---