

Press release



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One hundred and six national organisations now call for junk food advertising ban

A new report [1] submitted to the Government and the Food Standards Agency today [2] lists the 106 organisations [3] which already support the national campaign, co-ordinated by *Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming*, to protect children from unhealthy food promotions [4].

Copies of the report, *Children's Food and Health*, have been sent to the Prime Minister, Health Ministers and to Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. In a speech to the UK advertising industry today, it is expected that Ms Jowell will ignore the wide parental and professional support for a ban on junk food promotions, and call instead for industry act on a voluntary basis.

Children's Food and Health presents the overwhelming case for statutory controls to protect children from the advertising and promotion of unhealthy foods. It explains how commercial messages which present fatty, sugary and salty foods as positive and desirable choices put children's health at risk.

The report is published a week before the Food Standards Agency (FSA) is due to agree its policy recommendations on food promotions to children to the Government [5]. The Agency's own systematic review of research concludes that there is a causal link between food promotions and the kinds of food which children eat [6]. Sir John Krebs, the FSA's Chair, has also recently described child obesity due to poor nutrition and a lack of exercise as a "ticking timebomb" [7].

Charlie Powell, Project Officer at Sustain, commented, "The food industry has proved itself incapable of acting in a socially responsible way. Huge profits are at stake, so we don't believe that they will voluntarily stop promoting junk foods to kids. For the sake of children's health, statutory controls are urgently required".

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Editorial notes

[1] *Children's Food and Health – Why legislation is urgently required to protect children from unhealthy food advertising and promotions*, is downloadable from:
www.sustainweb.org

[2] The report has been submitted to:

- Rt Hon Tony Blair MP, Prime Minister;
- Sir John Krebs, Chair of the Food Standards Agency;
- The Rt Hon John Reid MP, Secretary of State for Health;
- Rt Hon Melanie Johnson MP, Minister for Public Health; and
- Rt Hon Tessa Jowell MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

[3] For a full list of the 106 supporting organisations, refer to Appendix I of the report, or see: www.sustainweb.org/labell_wp.asp

[4] Supporting organisations have confirmed their support for the following campaign policy statement:

We call upon the UK Government to introduce legislation to protect children from advertising and promotions, targeted directly at children, which promote foods that contribute to an unhealthy diet. These include confectionery, crisps, savoury snacks, soft drinks and other processed products containing high levels of fat, sugar or salt, excessive consumption of which is known to be detrimental to children's health. Voluntary approaches are not working, so statutory controls are needed to end commercial activities which promote these foods specifically to children.

[5] Food Standards Agency (FSA) policy recommendations to the Government on food promotions to children will be agreed at the FSA's Open Board Meeting at 9.30am on Thursday 11th March at Kensington Town Hall. For more information, see:
www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/boardmarch2004

[6] *Review of Research on the Effects of Food Promotion to Children*, published by the FSA on 22 September 2003. See:
www.food.gov.uk/healthiereating/promotion/readreview/

[7] "Timebomb alert over child obesity", BBC News Online, 9 November 2003. See:
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/3254375.stm>

[8] *Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming* advocates food and agricultural policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, enrich society and culture and promote equity. Sustain represents over 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional and local level. Membership is open to national organisations which do not distribute profits to private shareholders and which therefore operate in the public interest.