

# Press release



**Embargoed until 00.01 hours  
Thursday 29th January 2004**

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## Ofcom snubs children's health

Ofcom proposals for the future regulation of broadcast advertising ignore the current crisis in public health and will do nothing to protect children from the detrimental effects of junk food advertising. This is the conclusion of the consultation response from *Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming*, submitted today to the new broadcast regulator.[1]

The proposals will result in a delegation of Ofcom's statutory responsibilities to the industry-funded Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) in a move towards much weaker industry self-regulation. In sharp contrast, ninety eight national organisations currently support Sustain's call for legislation to protect children from unhealthy food advertising.[2]

Charlie Powell, Project Officer at Sustain, commented, "*It is naive of Ofcom to believe that the ASA - an industry body - will adopt an unbiased and impartial stance in the regulation of junk food advertising to children. These proposals suggest that Ofcom is more concerned with appeasing commercial interests than protecting the public. Ofcom should abandon these plans and instead strengthen the current statutory system*".

The need for statutory measures to end the promotion of unhealthy foods to children is reinforced by the findings of the recent Food Standards Agency systematic review which found a causal link between television advertising and children's food consumption.[3] Referring to obesity as a "health time bomb" in his 2002 Annual Report, the Chief Medical Officer also called for the adoption of the precautionary principle for the marketing of foods high in fat, salt and added sugars to children.[4]

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### **Notes to Editors**

1. *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's response to Ofcom's consultation on the future of broadcast advertising is available at [www.sustainweb.org](http://www.sustainweb.org)

2. A list of national organisations currently supporting Sustain's campaign calling for the introduction of legislation to protect children from unhealthy food is available at:  
[http://www.sustainweb.org/labell\\_wp.asp](http://www.sustainweb.org/labell_wp.asp)
3. 'Review of Research on the Effects of Food Promotion to Children', Food Standards Agency, September 2003. <http://www.food.gov.uk/healthiereating/promotion/readreview/>
4. 'Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer 2002: Health Check – On the State of the Public Health', Department of Health, July 2003. <http://www.doh.gov.uk/cmo/annualreport2002/index.htm>