

Press release



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For immediate release

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Food campaigners welcome Education Bill's death-knell for 'Turkey Twizzlers'.

Campaigners for better children's food welcomed the Education Bill published today. The Bill will mean that there are tough rules on the standard of school meals, as well as other food sold in schools. This sounds the death-knell for 'Turkey Twizzlers' and other junk foods in schools.

Mary Creagh MP, who introduced the Children's Food Bill to Parliament in May 2005, said: *"I am delighted the Government has delivered on its promise to improve the quality of food in schools. School meals will be governed by tough rules and junk food and fizzy drinks will be taken out of vending machines and tuck shops. I also welcome the new powers enabling local authorities to provide free school meals for all children in their area if they choose."*

She added: *"The Government now needs to take the final step and ban the advertising of junk food to kids altogether"*.

Dr Mike Rayner, Director of the British Heart Foundation Health Promotion Research Group at Oxford University said: *"Childhood obesity is a major, and growing, problem. At current rates of growth obesity among young people will have in future years a ruinous effect on the nation's health, and therefore its finances. The Government's proposals to improve school food and remove unhealthy choices from school vending machines are a good start. It is now up to the new School Food Trust to ensure that the regulations on food in school are as rigorous as parents are demanding. However, more needs to be done to address increasing rates of childhood obesity and we hope the Government will take this opportunity to support the Children's Food Bill"*. Dr Rayner is also Chair of the Children's Food Bill working party at Sustain.

The importance of improving children's health and fighting childhood obesity was highlighted today by a report from the National Audit Office, the Healthcare Commission and the Audit Commission which showed that obesity among under-11s has increased by over 43% between 1995 and 2003.

Ends.

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Notes to Editors

1. The Children's Food Bill calls for:
 - protecting children from the marketing of unhealthy food and drink products
 - improving standards to ensure that all school meals are healthy
 - banning the sale of unhealthy food and drinks from school vending machines
 - teaching food education and practical food skills, such as cooking and growing, to all children
 - ensuring the government promotes healthy foods, like fruit and vegetables, to children

It was presented to Parliament by Mary Creagh, Member of Parliament for Wakefield, on Wednesday 22 June 2005. The Bill will return to Parliament in June this year.

2. The 161 national organisations already support Sustain's campaign for the Children's Food Bill to become law. This list includes many prominent medical, health and consumer organisations, professional associations and children's charities – the full list is available from:
www.sustainweb.org/child_sup.asp

278 MPs from all parties who have confirmed their support for the Children's Food Bill by signing the Children's Food Early Day Motion, EDM 378. For a list please see:
<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=28588&SESSION=875>

3. *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* is a registered charity and has a membership of around 100 national public interest organisations. For more information, see: www.sustainweb.org