

# Scottish Government Consultation on A Healthier Future – Action and Ambitions on Diet, Activity and Healthy Weight



## Sustain response

### About Sustain:

Written evidence submitted by Sustain: the alliance for Better Food and Farming. Sustain advocates food and agriculture 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. We represent around 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional and local level. Amongst our influential projects and campaigns are:

- **Children's Food Campaign:** which focuses on the rules and standards that hold business to account for the quality of the food sold, served and marketed to families and children, and notably helped lead the push for a sugary drinks tax, for junk free checkouts in supermarkets, for improving the standard of food being served in schools, and for food education being put back on the curriculum and the introduction (and continuation) of universal infant free school meals, as well as setting up a Parents' Jury for the UK.
- **Beyond the Food Bank:** Our annual report in its third year compares local authority commitments to tackling food poverty, including children's access to food 365 days a year and free school meal uptake.
- **Food Power:** working to alleviate food poverty by calling on Governments across the four nations to tackle the root causes such as low pay, as well as to improve and protect publicly-funded nutrition programmes. We are launching a related programme to support local food poverty alliances across the UK including in London.
- **Sustainable Food Cities:** a network of local food partnerships improving local food systems by bringing together local government, community groups and businesses taking a joined up approach to food issues locally. It is run nationally by Sustain, the Soil Association and Food Matters and involves almost 50 cities and places across the UK, including three in Scotland. Through this network and beyond, Sustain have run the **Sugar Smart** campaign, which is helping local authorities, organisations, workplaces and individuals to reduce the amount of sugar we all consume, including three parts of Scotland.
- Through our various projects and networks we support a variety of projects and enterprises in Scotland, including bakeries, food coops, and helping improve children's access to water.

This submission does not represent the detailed views of all of Sustain's member organisations, some of whom we understand have put in their own submissions.

## **1. Are there any other types of price promotion that should be considered in addition to those listed above?**

1.1 We support the measures proposed.

1.2 Whilst research by market research firm IRI found that there was a 25% reduction in the number of items on price promotion in stores between November 2012 and April 2017<sup>1</sup>, both sports drinks and chocolate were identified as two categories where price promotions were still being heavily deployed, and therefore restricting price promotions is still extremely relevant in the fight against obesity.

1.3 It is also worth noting that the arrival of discounted stores such as Aldi and Lidl have also resulted in a shift in major supermarkets from temporary price promotions to permanent pricing reductions.

1.4 The Scottish Government could explore measures which would require food retailers to prove that they were not engaging in loss-leading on HFSS products, including sugary drinks, snacks, confectionery, high fat/salt-laden ready meals etc.

1.5 In addition to implementing restrictions on price-based promotions of HFSS products, however, the Scottish Government should explore extending similar restrictions also to non-price based promotions, including for example the use of celebrity endorsements, film and TV programme tie ins, and cartoon characters (both licensed and brand-generated assets) on HFSS food in store and on packaging. At present, rules for non-broadcast marketing of HFSS products do not cover in-store promotions and on-pack promotions, so such a move would set a positive precedent in Scotland.

1.6 Campaigning and voluntary business action has resulted in around 50% of retailers now removing junk food from checkouts, however this is far from universal, and in particular remains prevalent in the convenience sector. The Scottish Government could now move to mandate all multiples to remove any remaining junk food from checkouts, and explore possible incentives and encouragement for the convenience sector to follow suit.

## **2. How do we most efficiently and effectively define the types of food and drink that we will target with these measures?**

2.1 The most efficient and effective way of defining the types of food and drink would be to adopt the UK Department of Health's current nutrient profiling model, which evidence-based, has involved stakeholder consultation and input, is universally well-known and being implemented across the food industry. To adopt a separate definition could prove complex and confusing.

2.2 The Scottish Government should work closely with the UK Department of Health to ensure that the updated nutrient profiling model is robust and progressive when it is published in early 2018, and contribute to any future reviews of this model. The updated model will reflect the latest scientific evidence on nutrition and health, notably the findings of the Scientific Committee on Nutrition's (SACN) 2015 report on carbohydrates and health.

## **3. To what extent do you agree with the actions we propose on non-broadcast advertising of products high in fat, salt and sugar?**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.marketingweek.com/2017/08/14/promotions-lowest-level-decade/>  
<https://www.iriworldwide.com/en-GB/insights/Publications/Price-and-Promotions>

3.1 We welcome and support the Scottish Parliament's commitment in 1.17 to press the UK government to extend broadcast regulations on HFSS advertising to the 9pm watershed, or alternatively press for devolved powers to enact this within Scotland.

3.2 We agree with the proposal to monitor the effectiveness of CAP regulations on non-broadcast advertising of HFSS products. However, the Children's Food Campaign monitoring since their introduction in July 2017 suggest that there are loopholes in the regulations which need to be addressed with some urgency:

- 3.2.1 Conduct focused monitoring on the implementation of CAP regulations in cinemas – both the advertising on screen during any film with a certificate of 15 or less, and their surrounding food environment, with special deals and film-tie ins on confectionery, sugary drinks and more.
- 3.2.2 Press for the extension of CAP regulations on non-broadcast marketing on HFSS products to include on-pack promotions for children's film and TV tie-ins, branded toys, use of licensed cartoon characters or similar brand-asset cartoon characters.
- 3.2.3 Place a ban on all outdoor (eg. billboard, bus shelter) advertising of HFSS products within a 400 metre radius of any primary or secondary school in Scotland.
- 3.2.4 Work with Scottish local authorities and to implement a pilot additional levy on all advertising of HFSS products, with income hypothecated for investment in healthy food programmes, which could include school breakfast clubs, cookery classes, installation of public drinking water fountains, etc.

#### **4. Do you think any further or different action is required for the out of home sector?**

4.1 The out of home sector is growing rapidly and it is essential to engage this sector in healthy eating programmes and campaigns. While large national and multi-national chains are usually the focus for national programmes and awards schemes, there is more that can be done to engage smaller independent businesses in healthy eating campaigns and programmes.

4.2 One way of engaging these outlets is through SUGAR SMART - <http://www.sugarsmartuk.org/>, a campaign of Jamie Oliver and Sustain to reduce sugar consumption. The campaign supports cities, counties and boroughs to reduce sugar consumption by transforming the local food environment and raising public awareness around the health impacts of consuming too much sugar. It does this through taking a cross-sectoral approach, partnering with local organisations and working with 10 key sectors including local independent restaurants and food outlets.

4.3 To date 47 cities and other local areas have joined the SUGAR SMART programme – including 3 in Scotland. Once a local area has signed up it will have access to a range of helpful resources including promotional materials, support through webinars and meetings and platforms for sharing case studies and best practice with colleagues up and down the country.

4.4 The SUGAR SMART campaign recommends restaurants and food outlets make the following changes:

- Ban price promotions: Ban price promotions on sugary drinks and snacks such as discounts, multi-buys, free items or meal deals.
- Establish sugar-free checkouts: Ensure there are no sugary drinks and snacks for sale at checkout areas to discourage impulse buying.
- Get accredited: Get accredited by an external organisation to ensure the food and drink you serve is healthy for people and planet.
- Improve vending options: Remove sugary items from vending machines and display information about the amount of sugar in everyday food and drink.
- Increase the price of sugary drinks: Increase the price difference between sugary drinks and healthier alternatives
- Introduce a sugar levy: Introduce a 10p levy (or higher) on sugary drinks and sign up to the Children's Health Fund.
- Promote water: Install water points and promote drinking water as the number one drink.
- Remove adverts for sugar: Remove ads and make it policy not to advertise or promote any food and drink high in sugar.
- Remove sugary drinks: Stop selling drinks high in sugar and promote water and no-added sugar drinks instead.
- Sign up to healthy workplace schemes: Get your organisation to sign up to schemes such as the Workplace Wellbeing Charter.
- Spread the word: Spread the word in your community on the dangers of too much sugar by organising events or stunts.
- Stock healthier food and drink: Replace sugary items with healthier options and display signage about sugar content in everyday food and drink.

4.5 Public sector institutions can play both a direct role in changing diets through what is presented on the plate, at checkouts and in vending machines; and an educational role in linking trusted social and health professionals with advice on healthier eating. We applaud the moves made by individual hospitals or groups of hospitals to implement programmes such as improving patient food, implementing Malnutrition Advisory Group screening and mitigation; meeting Government Buying Standards for catering and CQUIN targets for sugar reduction; implementing Food for Life Served Here catering standards and going further to improve the whole hospital environment. The pioneers have now proved what can be achieved, and within budget.

4.6 However, many hospitals still lag behind - it is widespread uptake and integration of such standards into normal institutional culture that must be achieved. We do not have data for Scottish hospitals, but in England only about half of hospitals are currently meeting even contractual baseline standards for food quality, and there is little indication of active encouragement for them to improve, except through the CQUIN targets currently focusing on reducing the availability and promotion of less healthy food and drinks.

4.7 The Scottish Executive and NHS Scotland should challenge NHS Scotland hospitals to healthy 'race to the top', measuring, comparing and publishing data on food quality for public scrutiny. In England, Sustain is in the early stages of developing such an approach and would be happy to share this.

4.8 We would also like to comment briefly on the relevance of point 1.24 in the consultation document to the ambitions with the out of home sector. We run a project called Planning Food Cities - <https://www.sustainweb.org/planning/> - that looks at how to better incorporate food into the planning system. Whilst it currently works throughout the UK to give advice to local areas on how to weave (community) food growing within local planning, we are also

collating good practice on how planning can be used to improve access to food, with junk food outlets being one of the key areas.

4.9 The principle of using local planning laws to restrict new junk food outlets opening within 500m of schools has been well documented, with long standing examples such as Waltham Forest Council adopting this ten years ago, and many others following suit. Other areas have looked into restricting opening times of these outlets (Manchester), and looking at using the granting of alcohol licenses to encourage participation in local health initiatives (Tower Hamlets). We would be happy to send a separate more detailed list of examples on planning being used to tackle junk food.

## **5. Do you think current labelling arrangements could be strengthened?**

**Sustain's Response: Yes**

5.1 We support the Obesity Health Alliance position that current labelling arrangements could be strengthened. We support mandatory front-of-pack labelling system for all processed foods including multiples and large scale providers to the out of home sector (the SME/independent out of home sector could be encouraged to take a voluntary approach) to build a level playing field to both consumers and industry. We believe the colour traffic light system is the most useful and clear for the public, and should become the norm for both branded and retailer own-label foods. We would like to see the Scottish Government explore options on how to communicate free sugar content of foods, as part of this scheme, as well as helping the public understand free sugars.

## **6. What specific support do Scottish food and drink SMEs need most to reformulate and innovate to make their products healthier?**

6.1 We would encourage Scottish Government to build on the success of the Soft Drinks Industry Levy and look at going further than UK-wide policy and pioneering levies on other products. One of the most interesting features of the introduction of the Soft Drinks Industry Levy has been the reformulation of approximately 50% of soft drinks manufactured in the UK. We believe that a similar levy could be explored to encourage reformulation or reduction in consumption of other products that are large contributors to sugar in children's diets, such as breakfast cereals or confectionary. We also believe that a levy applied to junk food marketing, may have a similar impact on both what is advertised and on reformulation of products, and is due exploration.

6.2 We would advocate that scrutiny is given to any public subsidy of food and drink businesses to ensure that any receiving support meet the aims of this strategy. One consideration would be to test any subsidy being considered against the (Government) nutrient profiling modelling.

## **7. Do you think any further or different action is required to support a healthy weight from birth to adulthood?**

7.1 Our '[Beyond the Food Bank](#)' work in London and UK-wide [Food Power](#) programme both support local areas to develop and share good practice in tackling food poverty to improve health and wellbeing; this includes supporting a healthy weight. While we recognise the

specific Scottish context, our recommendations are based on learning from working with partners throughout the UK.

7.2 We welcome the particular focus on breastfeeding, and advocate an ongoing Scottish Government role supporting the Unicef Baby Friendly scheme. Despite the modest increases in recent years, we know that Scotland, like the rest of the UK, has one of the lowest rates of breastfeeding worldwide. The Scottish Government and partners should continue to work with the Unicef Baby Friendly scheme to support accreditation with the scheme and encourage the participation of those maternity units and community health partnerships which are currently not engaging with the scheme.

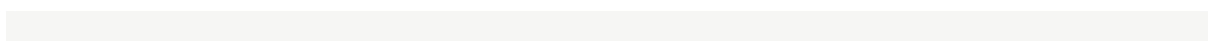
7.3 We welcome the opportunity presented by the devolution of the Healthy start scheme. We would like the Scottish Government, local government, health services and partners to agree a programme to promote and maximise uptake of the Healthy Start scheme. This would include supporting those working with families and diverse retailers (including supermarkets, convenience stores, markets and food coops) to ensure there is wide coverage for spending the voucher element of the scheme. In our experience of working with local authorities and partners, this work sometimes has to start with an honest discussion among partners about their own knowledge of the scheme and a plan to address these gaps.

7.4 We would also suggest that with the discussions around control over farm payments post-Brexit, that Scottish Government should explore the potential to implement a scheme similar to that in the USA, where some farm payments are linked to food production for lower income communities – facilitated through vouchers – which could be an evolution of the UK's Healthy Start vouchers.

7.5 The Year of Young People presents an excellent opportunity to engage communities on the issue of how children and young people access a good diet 365 days a year. Research has shown that those most likely to be at risk of hunger, obesity or a less healthy diet come from more deprived areas.

7.6 In particular the issue of holiday hunger is becoming a growing concern when it comes to food security beyond the school day. We recognise that much good work is already happening in some local authorities in Scotland on this challenging topic but we feel that more needs to be done. This work could help underpin the Child Poverty Bill and Scotland's ambition to become a 'Good Food Nation'. We also recognise that local authorities have the freedom to deliver holiday meal programmes and can play a key role in assessing and facilitating a coordinated response to 'holiday hunger' alongside third sector partners. However they lack clear guidance on this issue and there remains a role for the Scottish Government to support local authorities and their partners with more resources to fulfil this role. We would therefore urge Scottish Government to actively invest in this area as we believe it presents an ideal opportunity to reach a new generation of children and parents to promote healthier lifestyles.

**Sustain did not provide responses to Q8, Q9, Q10**





## **11. What do you think about the action we propose for making obesity a priority for everyone?**

11.1 We welcome the reference to the importance of making obesity a priority for everyone and action by the public, private and voluntary sectors.

11.2 The SUGAR SMART campaign (see details in answer to question 4) is a great framework for getting cross-sectoral buy-in and tackle sugar, one of the leading causes of obesity. SUGAR SMART campaigns are normally led by Public Health teams in local authorities, working closely with partners from the private and voluntary sectors and other public sector organisations such as hospitals and universities.

11.3 A key step to become a SUGAR SMART city or local area is to form a partnership group including local authority, local businesses, public sectors organisations, NGOs, community groups and others. Getting this group together is essential to take stock of existing initiatives and action (e.g. in the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy or Obesity Strategy or activity of a local Food Partnership) and start defining priorities for the future campaign based on research into the sectors and type of action necessary to start tackling the problem locally. The SUGAR SMART campaign encourages areas to write an action plan to set out aims and targets, as a way to help with communications, engagement, focus, and ultimately to be able to look back at what they've achieved at the end of the campaign. Many areas have kicked off their campaigns with a public debate or survey as a way to engage the public and local organisations.

11.4 While SUGAR SMART is about getting everyone in the community involved, we recognise local government has a special role to play and should get its own 'house in order' to ensure it uses its control and influence to promote healthier food and drink. The Local Government Declaration on Sugar Reduction and Healthier Food - <http://www.sustainweb.org/londonfoodlink/declaration> provides a useful framework to make an inventory of all policies and practices under the direct control or influence of local governments to address 6 key areas:

11.5 Tackle corporate advertising and sponsorship, for example:

- Restrict advertising of sugary drinks and food high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) in advertising spaces owned by the local council, either through nutrient profiling or introduction of a levy on these adverts, with money raised going to support initiatives that promote alternatives.
- Restrict sponsorship to programmes and projects from sugary drinks companies, manufacturers of foods HFSS and fast food companies.

11.6 Improve the food controlled or influenced by the council, for example:

- Introduce or build on existing commitment to sustainable food for catering under council control by reducing the sugar content (reformulating recipes) and/or eliminating foods high in sugar.

11.7 Reduce prominence of sugary drinks and promote free drinking water, for example:

- Get water refill stations on major transport hubs.
- Put in place voluntary sugary drinks levy and raise funds for children's health promotion in council canteens and other cafes and restaurants owned or influenced by the council.

11.8 Support businesses and organisations to improve their food offer, for example:

- Use planning policies to limit the development of new hot food takeaways not just around schools but also in town centres and near other places where young people congregate.

11.9 Ensure public events are exemplars of healthy food culture, for example:

- Ensure food and drink provided at public events organised by the local council meet healthier food guidelines, and avoid HFSS food offers.
- Ensure that the majority of food and drink provided at public events on council premises and property meet healthier food guidelines and avoid HFSS.

11.10 Raise public awareness and encourage action in other settings, for example:

- Use the council's influence to encourage organisations, institutions and businesses to sign up to nationally-recognised campaigns (such as SUGAR SMART) to transform their food environments and use their reach to inspire more Scots to make healthier choices.

### **Sustain did not provide responses to Q12, Q13**

### **14 Do you have any other comments about any of the issues raised in this consultation?**

Sustain welcomes the vision contained in A Healthier Future, and we hope that it creates leadership to spur action in other parts of the UK.

Sustain, the alliance for food and farming, would be happy to support the Scottish Government, and relevant local authorities and communities, to turn this vision into reality.

Response submitted by Ben Reynolds, Deputy CEO, Sustain

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