

Press release



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Children's Food Bill to ban junk food ads launched in Parliament

In response to the growing crisis in children's diet-related health [1], a Children's Food Bill [2], developed by *Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming* and supported by 114 national organisations [3], will be presented to Parliament today by Debra Shipley MP.

The Bill will improve children's current and future health and prevent food-related ill-health, such as childhood obesity and the many other diseases which are linked to children's junk food diets.

It requires the Food Standards Agency to specify criteria for unhealthy and healthy food, taking into account nutritional content and other criteria such as the presence of additives and contaminants. Based on these criteria, the marketing to children of unhealthy foods will be prohibited and the Government will be required to publish an annual plan to promote healthy foods to children, such as fruit and vegetables.

The Bill will also address the types of foods which are available to children at school. It includes regulations which will set compositional standards for school meals, improve food education and skills and prevent unhealthy foods from being sold in school vending machines.

Charlie Powell, Project Officer at Sustain explained, "As well as ending commercial activities that directly promote junk food and drink to children, the Children's Food Bill will also improve the quality of children's food.

As huge profits are at stake, calls for the junk food industry to act voluntarily are simply naive. Our coalition of 114 national organisations recognises that statutory measures to improve children's diets are urgently needed".

Following its presentation to Parliament, there will be a Children's Food Bill launch event in Committee Room 15 of the Palace of Westminster, from 3.00pm to 4.00pm. [4] Representatives of the media are invited to attend.

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Editorial notes

[1] For example, the Chief Medical Officer has described childhood obesity as a "public health time bomb" which needs to be defused (CMO Annual Report 2002). Obesity in six year olds has

doubled (to 8.5%) and trebled among 15 year olds (to 15%) over a 10 year period and *adult-onset* (Type II) diabetes is now seen in school children (Health Survey England, 2001).

[2] The Children's Food Bill can be downloaded from www.sustainweb.org/childrensfoodbill

[3] For a current list of supporting organisations, see: www.sustainweb.org/child_sup.asp

[4] The launch event will be chaired by Dr Mike Rayner, Director, British Heart Foundation Health Promotion Research Group and presentations will be given by Debra Shipley MP, Charlie Powell, Project Officer, Sustain and Kath Dalmeny, Policy Officer, The Food Commission.

Committee Room 15 is located on the Committee Corridor (1st Floor) of the Palace of Westminster and entry is via St Stephen's Entrance.

[5] *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.