



15<sup>th</sup> July 2008

Dear Stakeholder

## **HEALTHY WEIGHT, HEALTHY LIVES – TAKING FORWARD THE HEALTHY FOOD CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE**

### **Background**

On 23 January 2008 the Government published Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives – a Cross Government strategy for England (HWHL). This is an integrated programme of initiatives, which aims to reverse the rising tide of obesity and overweight through supporting people to have a healthy diet and an active lifestyle.

The strategy sets out both what the Government will do and its expectations of others. Healthy Weight, healthy Lives calls on all sections of society to make changes to help people make healthier choices. The strategy has been backed by £372m including £75m for a Government social marketing programme that will support people to change their behaviour. There are five key strands to the strategy:

- i) The healthy growth and development of our children
- ii) Promoting healthier food choices
- iii) Building physical activity into our lives.
- iv) Creating incentives for better health
- v) Personalised advice and support

Within the strand on promoting healthier food choices, there is a challenge to all sectors of the food industry summarised in the Healthy Food Code of Good Practice. The Code sets out seven areas where the Government expects companies in every food sector to take action to demonstrate their commitment to promote healthy eating. These seven areas appear in the first column of the attached table at Annex A.

DH and the FSA want to work with industry leaders and other relevant stakeholders on delivering the Code, building on the good work already underway. This letter sets out how we plan to take this work forward.

### **A partnership approach**

The Code provides a framework to underpin partnership working on the policies it covers with the aim of maximising efficiency and impact. The key principles we aim to work to are:

- Government recognises that the Code is not starting from scratch, and will seek to build on progress to date.

- Government will use current mechanisms to work on elements of the Code wherever possible.
- Work on the Code should not replace or delay any other work to improve diets.
- The Code is intended to be stretching and we are seeking industry commitments which are substantive and quantifiable.
- Clear timescales will be set for the delivery of desired outcomes
- An evidence based approach will underpin the setting of outcomes and milestones
- Government will seek to make progress on all elements of the Code in parallel.
- Openness and transparency, with due respect to commercial confidentiality, and clear monitoring mechanisms.

### **Clarifying responsibilities and developing milestones**

Overall responsibility for the Healthy Food Code rests with DH Ministers and the Department of Health. Within this overall responsibility, DH and the FSA have more specific policy and programme leads, and we thought it would be helpful to make clear where day to day responsibility for each of the seven elements of the Code sits. To this end, the attached table at Annex A sets out for each elements of the Code where responsibility lies in Government.

Further, as a priority, we want to translate the current high level objectives in the Code into transparent, concrete outcomes against which we can monitor progress. In some areas, for example, reduction of salt and saturated fat intakes, targets already exist, and there has already been significant progress on front of pack labelling, consumer information, promotion of foods to children, workplace catering and healthy eating messaging.

So, Annex A also sets out for each element of the Code the current position, our desired outcome and proposed milestones for making further progress.

The element on information on nutritional content of food in a wider range of settings should be seen in the context of the related FSA work on catering. This is not only looking at consumer information but is also encouraging companies to offer a greater range of healthy choices, and to make incremental changes that will make mainstream choices healthier through co-ordinated actions across procurement, menu planning and kitchen practice.

### **Stakeholder arrangements**

We want to discuss outcomes with all those who have an interest, including NGOs, businesses and trade associations. Engagement in each individual element will be organised by the lead Department(s). We will aim, wherever possible, to use existing mechanisms eg the FSA has a number of existing working groups on catering and labelling and ad hoc groups discussing salt, saturated fat and sugar reduction.

We also propose the following engagement activities to discuss the Code as a whole:

- Joint stakeholder meetings involving Dawn Primarolo and Dame Deirdre Hutton to explore opportunities to make swifter progress;

- Discussions on monitoring the Code and to consider the most effective ways of driving change;
- Holding a seminar or series of seminars to showcase examples of good practice;
- The NSSG provides a forum to discuss progress, help deliver the outcomes, identify opportunities and remove obstacles. An initial discussion was held on 28 April and the minutes have been published.

We are planning to hold the first of these events in the autumn to bring together progress on all seven elements of the Code, and outline expectations on trajectories for each of the commitments. We will be in touch with more details by the end of July.

Work on the Code will be closely linked to and supportive of both the wider Coalition for Better Health and the healthy living social marketing programme mentioned in Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives.

### **Monitoring progress: via the HWHL annual report**

It will be essential to monitor progress against the commitments we agree. Monitoring regimes will need to be tailored to the specific action area and will not duplicate work that is already underway. The FSA already has in place mechanisms for monitoring progress towards the salt targets and for work with the catering sector on workplace catering. DH is also monitoring progress on advertising food to children. The National Diet and Nutrition Survey rolling programme will provide results from early 2010 covering intakes from 2008 onwards.

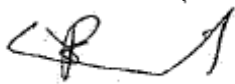
HWHL commits to an annual report which will assess progress against the commitments across all five themes of the strategy. This annual report will include a section on the Healthy Food Code of Practice that clearly sets out where progress has been made, highlighting particular examples of good practice and setting out areas where further effort is needed.

### **Next steps**

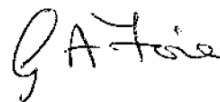
Lead contacts will be in touch about next steps on individual strands and we will contact you regularly to update you on progress overall.

Please don't hesitate to contact one of us if you have any queries about the Code as a whole, or lead Departments for individual strands. A full set of contact details is attached at Annex B.

Yours sincerely



Dr Will Cavendish  
Director of Health and Wellbeing  
Department of Health



Gill Fine  
Director, Consumer Choice  
and Dietary Health  
Food Standards Agency

**ANNEX A – DEVELOPMENT OF OUTCOMES, GOALS AND MILESTONES FOR EACH ELEMENT OF THE CODE**

<b>Text of Code</b>	<b>Current position</b>	<b>Desired outcome</b>	<b>Next milestones</b>	<b>Govt lead</b>
i. A single, simple and effective approach to food labelling used by the whole food industry, based on the principles that will be recommended by the FSA in light of the research currently being undertaken	<p>Voluntary front of pack labelling widely adopted by retailers and manufacturers; different schemes in place</p> <p>Independent UK-wide evaluation underway</p> <p>Consultation on EU Commission proposals has closed and UK government line is being agreed.</p>	<p>Consumers are supported in choosing healthier options through a single, simple and effective approach to front of pack labelling</p>	<p>Evaluation due to complete Dec 2008 will look at effectiveness of current schemes</p> <p>Before December, FSA and DH will discuss with stakeholders the decision making process following publication of the evaluation results.</p>	<p>FSA lead</p> <p>Other interest DH BERR Defra</p>
ii. Smaller portion sizes for energy dense and salty foods	<p>FSA have published saturated fat and total energy programme of which portion size is one element</p> <p>FSA has published the report of its academic workshop on portion size and accompanying research in the summer.</p> <p>National Diet and Nutrition Survey provides some limited evidence on</p>	<p>Portion sizes for single portion foods reflect nutritional guidelines, including on energy and salt,</p> <p>Consumers recognise appropriate portion sizes and frequency</p>	<p>FSA will meet stakeholders in the Autumn to discuss the outcome of the workshop. and identify key priorities and timescales for action.</p>	<p>FSA lead</p> <p>Other interest s DH BERR Defra</p>

Text of Code	Current position	Desired outcome	Next milestones	Govt lead
	portion size			
<p>iii. Rebalance marketing, promotion, advertising and point-of-sale placement, so that we reduce the exposure of children to the promotion of foods that are HFSS and increase their exposure to the promotion of healthy options</p>	<p>Ofcom and CAP restrictions in place</p> <p>Review of nutrient profiling under way (FSA); decision April 2009</p> <p>Measurements of promotional activity are available but may need to extend bespoke monitoring mechanism.</p>	<p>Children's exposure to marketing and promotion of HFSS foods is reduced over time (baseline 2003), and their exposure to the marketing and promotion of healthier options is increased.</p>	<p>DH to publish report in July setting out changes in the nature and balance of advertising food and drink to children since 2003. This will cover broadcast, press, radio, cinema and internet media.</p> <p>DH to hold stakeholder event in Sept 2008 to discuss findings on non-broadcast media.</p> <p>Ofcom to publish findings of its review of broadcast restrictions by the end of 2008.</p> <p>On this basis, government to agree goals for further reductions in HFSS exposure if needed and increases in exposure to healthier options, taking account of restrictions introduced in 2007 and 2008.</p> <p>DH to work in</p>	<p>DH lead</p> <p>Other interest DCMS Ofcom FSA DCSF BERR Defra ASA</p>

Text of Code	Current position	Desired outcome	Next milestones	Govt lead
			<p>partnership with the convenience store sector to increase access to and availability of healthier products in convenience stores in deprived areas. Phase one of the project will be launched in September. The project will evaluate the impact on both businesses and on consumer behaviour and will report in 2009.</p>	
<p>iv. Reductions in the consumption of and levels of saturated fat and sugar in food – in particular the consumption of drinks with added sugar, along the lines of continuing action on salt</p>	<p>FSA Sat Fat programme; working groups in place and consumer awareness strategy for sat fat and total energy consumption</p> <p>Consumption of fat, sat fat, sugar and sugary drinks is measured</p>	<p>Intakes of salt, saturated fat and sugar falls to recommended levels, ie for adults salt to 6g per day, saturated fat to 11% energy and added sugar to 11% energy; and separate goals for children as appropriate</p>	<p>During 2008 the FSA to establish saturated fat and energy partnership groups (to include dairy, meat products, biscuits and cakes, soft drinks particularly added sugar soft drinks and confectionery).</p> <p>By end 2008 identify timetable for agreeing programmes of work and milestones that industry can</p>	<p>FSA lead</p> <p>Other interest DH DCSF Defra</p>

Text of Code	Current position	Desired outcome	Next milestones	Govt lead
			<p>work towards.</p> <p>Industry is working towards current 2006 salt targets by 2010; salt targets will be reviewed in 2008 and any changes implemented</p>	
<p>v. Increased consumption of healthy foods, particularly fruit and vegetables</p>	<p>5 A DAY programme in place</p> <p>Consumption of fruit and vegetables and proportion of people eating 5 a day are measured</p> <p>Consumers are eating too much saturated fat and salt and not enough fruit, vegetables and oily fish.</p>	<p>The population to have an appropriate balance between calorie intake and energy expenditure</p> <p>High percentage of adults and children are consuming a at least 5 fruit and vegetables a day.</p> <p>Food consumption reflects a balanced diet according to nutritional guidelines, eg the eatwell plate</p> <p>Intakes of fibre, salt , saturated fat, added sugar etc are at recommended levels</p>	<p>SACN will consult on energy intake recommendations by April 2009.</p> <p>Increase numbers achieving 5 A DAY by 3% each year (latest figure 30% HSE 2006)</p> <p>Continue to increase awareness of the 5 a day message to 90% by 2009 (latest figure 79% FSA CAS 2006).</p> <p>Agree and publish level and timing of goals for increases in consumption of fruit and vegetables by low income young families and young men by Sept</p> <p>In consultation</p>	<p>DH and FSA</p>

Text of Code	Current position	Desired outcome	Next milestones	Govt lead
			<p>with industry and other relevant stakeholders deliver a definitive 5 A DAY “what counts” criteria for consumers by April 2009</p> <p>Agree any further work on a balanced diet including level and timing of goals</p> <p>Provide public recognition of industry good practice through seminars and written evidence provided by stakeholders as appropriate</p>	
<p>vi. All food businesses to work with the FSA, DH and other stakeholders to deliver a single set of key healthy eating messages</p>	<p>Current messages via Eatwell and individual campaigns</p> <p>Key healthy eating messages being developed for social marketing campaign</p> <p>No measurement of how food businesses or others deliver these messages</p>	<p>Single set of healthy eating messages gives a consistent message to consumers and impacts behaviour</p>	<p>FSA and DH develop a single set of messages to complement the salt, saturated fat and 5 A DAY programmes by autumn 2008</p> <p>Stakeholder discussions on input into campaigns and delivery of key messages and stakeholders to align own activity to these messages</p>	<p>DH and FSA</p> <p>Other interest DCSF Defra DCMS BERR</p>

<b>Text of Code</b>	<b>Current position</b>	<b>Desired outcome</b>	<b>Next milestones</b>	<b>Govt lead</b>
<p>vii. Information on nutritional content of food in a wide range of settings (eg theme parks, visitor attractions, restaurants, take away foods) to be clear, effective and simple to understand</p>	<p>Front of pack labelling tailored for retail</p> <p>Food service programme of work on procurement, kitchen practice, menu planning and consumer information. FSA have secured voluntary commitments from major workplace catering providers and their suppliers; workplace catering commitments have been published covering 80% of provision</p>	<p>Consumers have access to clear information on food when eating out of the home or purchasing take-out foods; and healthier choices are provided in all venues</p>	<p>Agree effective forms of nutritional information in all major non-retail settings (eg restaurants, take away foods, canteens etc)</p> <p>By end 2008 develop the timetable for action.</p> <p>Extend workplace commitments on healthier provision to major providers in the rest of the catering sector. Report on progress in January 2009.</p>	<p>FSA lead</p> <p>Other interest DH DCMS Defra</p>

## Annex B – Healthy Food Code of Good Practice

### DH and FSA contact details

#### DH contacts

##### **Overall code and DH lead elements (iii, v, vi)**

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##### **Healthy eating messages (vi), promoting healthier food choices (v), liaison with FSA, and lead on Promotion of food to children (iii).**

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#### FSA contacts

##### **Overall Code and FSA lead elements (i, ii, iv, v, vi, vii)**

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##### **Healthy eating messages (vi), promoting healthier food choices (v)**

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##### **Reformulation (iv), portion size (ii) & work with catering sector (vii) liaison with DH**

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##### **Front of pack labelling (i)**

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