

Item 5: The Work Programme of the Food Network

Introduction

1. As we approach the first anniversary of the launch of the Responsibility Deal, it is timely to review progress and next steps for taking forward the work programme of the Food Network. The aim of this paper is to pave the way for discussion by the High Level Steering Group of the priorities and pace going forward. This will provide clarity for the work programme in the short and medium-term, allowing all contributors to the Food Network to plan their efforts and deployment of resources accordingly.

Where we have got to

Our original framework for action

2. Early in its inception, the Food Network agreed that its actions should build on 4 pillars, namely:
 - information to consumers
 - content of food
 - improving the food environment
 - promotion of healthier food choices

and developed a 'long list' of potential areas for action (annexed to this paper for reference). These helped shape a 3-phased approach to development of pledges agreed by the High Level Steering Group as described below.

The work programme, and progress to date

3. Phase 1 of the work programme consisted of development and roll-out of pledges on out of home calorie labelling, salt reduction, and removal of artificial trans fats.
4. At the time of writing, there were 41 partners signed-up to delivery of out of home calorie labelling; 71 partners signed-up to salt reduction, and 87 partners signed-up to removal of artificial trans fats. Partner delivery plans are now available on the Department of Health's website, with monitoring returns due in April. These are expected to show the substantial progress made to date.
5. Phase 2, corresponding broadly to the current fiscal year, comprises development and roll-out of two major new pledges; a comprehensive calorie reduction pledge, and actions to increase intake of fruit and vegetables. These pledges are in the final stages of development and we hope will go live soon.

Pointers to the future

6. Recent discussions with various partners suggest that our programme should in future take account of the following -
 - the potential to get more progress by focusing on the depth of delivery of existing pledges and breadth of engagement
 - the need for a clear forward plan and appropriate prioritisation to ensure all parties are clear, and to help with focussing of resources
 - the need to balance transparency and accountability on the one hand, and minimising burdens on the other.

Aligning the work programme with our public health priorities

7. Officials from the Health and Wellbeing Division of the Department of Health recently undertook an exercise to take stock of the work programme as originally agreed with key health and healthcare priorities. This took into account balancing those areas where greatest progress is needed with those having the greatest scope to deliver benefits, particularly through a successful partnership approach. This stock-taking exercise concluded that the work programme was an overall good fit with relevant public health objectives, complemented by a range of other initiatives across the Responsibility Deal and beyond.
8. The work programme is aimed ultimately at improving key outcomes in relation to prevention and control of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, cardio-vascular disease and some cancers, as well as excess weight which is a risk factor for many of those diseases as well as a major health (and economic) problem itself.
9. The key areas for action through the Food Network which contribute to improving those outcomes are:
 - calorie reduction (with a related role for out of home calorie labelling) – to tackle excess weight
 - salt reduction to reduce high blood pressure linked to cardiovascular disease and stroke
 - removal of trans fats and reduction of saturated fat, to prevent cardiovascular disease, and
 - increased consumption of fruit and vegetables to improve overall health including reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease and certain cancers.
10. These key areas for improvement need to be underpinned by enhanced provision of consumer information which potentially contributes to all of the outcomes and helps consumers to take responsibility and make informed decisions – including Front of Pack labelling (FOP) and out of home labelling,

11. Likewise, action to improve the balance of promotions – making these more of a force supporting healthier choices - needs to remain as an overarching theme, supporting the delivery of the areas of action in 9 above.
12. While it can be invidious to prioritise, there is reason to believe that calorie reduction and salt reduction are the twin aims which best balance the greatest need for improvement with the greatest scope for progress.
13. It is interesting to note that the work programme's areas for action correspond reasonably closely with international priorities, for example the World Health Organisation's global strategy on diet, physical activity and health (2004) including action to achieve a healthy weight.

Options for the possible shape of next stage of work – from April 2012

14. Taking account of the above analysis suggests the following shape to the work programme:
 - (a) a dominant focus on delivery and broadening commitment to *existing pledges and those close to being finalised* – i.e. out of home labelling, salt reduction, removal of artificial trans fats, calorie reduction, and fruit and vegetables. This would mean gaining more signatories and making further progress on delivery including the work underway on salt reduction for the catering sector), as well as building engagement and maximising sign-up to the new pledges on calorie reduction and fruit and vegetables
 - (b) progressing efforts in existing priority areas, notably salt. We will be discussing progress at a future HLSG made on reducing salt levels, and looking at potential options for taking forward salt reduction recognising that the current salt pledge will not deliver sufficient reduction to take us to 6g per day
 - (c) work completing coverage of the initial list of 'priority nutrients', notably saturated fat
 - (d) a new work stream on promotion of food which would add value to existing pledges
 - (e) responding to emerging issues which would benefit from collective agreement/action. For example, we need to move forward on FOP in light of agreement of the European Food Information Regulation (FIR). We are proposing to consult on this topic during Spring/ Summer 2012 and the way forward arising from this process could be brought back to the Food Network later.
15. There are a number of choices available in terms of how the work programme is taken forward, and the views of HLSG members would be most welcome. For example, focusing on broadening sign-up to existing pledges and building momentum and sign-up to the pledges we hope will

soon be agreed, requires us then to decide how long we give ourselves to drive this progress before coming onto deepening and completing action across other nutrients such as saturated fat or reinforcing areas such as further work on salt reduction, or initiating new work streams such as promotions. Ideally, we would like to achieve a consensus on this, and to know we have a realistic programme which will secure real delivery, rather than necessarily simply seek to advance on all fronts at once.

Questions for discussion and next steps

16. HLSG members are invited to discuss –

- the summary of progress, above
- the factors to take into account in moving forward
- the possible priorities and options outlined above.

17. Following discussion, we will reflect on views expressed and frame firm proposals to bring back to HLSG at its next meeting.

18. At that point it would also be useful to discuss how we work. The strength of the Responsibility Deal lies in the diversity of organisations that it brings together – public sector, commercial, non-governmental, and academic – in a collaborative approach, and this is something that we would like to build upon in future work. As part of this it would be worth looking again at the way we take work forward – and whether time-limited working groups, led by partners rather than the Department of Health, are an effective potential way forward - which could for example focus on engagement and building ownership as much as on development of new pledges.

19. With agreement of a new work programme it will also be timely to consider how we are structured, and whether we need to revisit membership of the High Level Steering Group itself to ensure that it is best placed, with the right balance and breadth of experience to build successfully on its first year of operation in taking the work programme forward.

Department of Health
February 2012

Annex A: FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME (AS AGREED IN MARCH 2011)

The Food Network has agreed its work programme should build on four pillars:

- information to consumers
- content of food
- improving the food environment
- promotion of healthier food choices

Work to date has, in part, been driven by the need to demonstrate progress by the time of launch, and by the opportunity to make decisions on important issues which have been the subject of prior discussions or activity.

Going forward, the Food Network will be able to build on this work and start to develop new initiatives from the long list of potential actions originally identified in October (at Annex B).

It is envisaged that the work programme for the coming years could be split into two phases:

Phase 2: 2011-2012

Further to discussions within the Food Network, it is proposed that over the next twelve months two new areas of work should be developed: a comprehensive calorie reduction pledge, and collective actions to increase intake of fruit and vegetables.

The focus on calorie reduction will build on the work that has already been undertaken to develop a 'menu of options', within a structured framework. Focusing on this area for the coming year brings significant benefits, in that it:

- has the potential to deliver real public health benefits in a way that draws public attention to the industry contribution to improving public health;
- allows contributions to be made from across the food sector, with clear roles for retailers, caterers, and manufacturers;
- enables the Food Network to start making progress on a number of fronts, insofar as they overlap with calorie reduction, eg saturated fat and promotions, and to draw in complementary issues such as sugar and alcohol reduction.

The workstream on fruit and vegetables allows the Food Network to build on the existing enthusiasm within the Network to deliver pledges in this area and on initial discussions that have already taken place, as well as to pick up some of the work identified by the Defra taskforce as needing action.

In addition to this, there will need to be continued work to follow through on the pledges agreed for the launch of the Responsibility Deal including, as appropriate, preparations for implementation, communication to and

engagement of the widest range of businesses, as well as development of monitoring and evaluation arrangements.

Phase 3: 2012 - 2014

The period after the launch of the calorie reduction and fruit and vegetable pledges will allow the Network to branch out and consider other issues of importance for public health nutrition. For instance, considering those aspects of saturated fat replacement that do not deliver a net calorie reduction, and wider activity to shift the balance of promotions to healthier foods. The Network will also need to review progress in previous work streams and may need to further advance work in these areas to achieve greater health gains.

Annex B: ADDITIONAL POTENTIAL AREAS FOR ACTION SUGGESTED BY PARTICIPANTS AT THE FIRST RESPONSIBILITY DEAL FOOD NETWORK MEETING (14 October 2010).

Representatives from the retail, catering, manufacturing, consumer and the non- government organisations identified the following additional areas for potential action to supplement the ideas proposed in the Responsibility Deal paper which would form the initial focus for the work of the Food Network.

1. Information to consumers

Change4Life

- Develop improved links between information and behaviour change via Change4Life (C4L).
- Communicate to consumer advice on portion control and frequency of eating different types of foods, rather than focussing on nutrients through C4L links.
- Promote understanding of hydration and how it can affect satiety.

Information on Pre-packaged Foods

- Do more to encourage consumers to use front of pack (FOP) nutrition information.

Information in the Out of Home (OOH) Sector

- Make meaningful OOH information available and accessible to consumers and educate consumers about calorie information in OOH settings with an initial focus on the larger outlet chains.
- Consider the most appropriate place to provide calorie information to consumers in order to influence their choice. For example, point of sale/service (POS) may be most appropriate for some types of out of home (OOH) settings, but in others the information may need to be provided in various/multiple places such as menus.
- Share commercial consumer research on OOH calorie information; i.e. what consumers want and need, and how they use the information to inform choice.
- Conduct research to address technical barriers to OOH calorie information.
- Develop guidance for businesses on how to provide OOH calorie information to ensure a level playing field and consistency in approach.

Education

- Promote added positive nutrients as marker of healthier choices.
- Do more to improve the healthy eating knowledge and skills of children through the school curriculum.
- Encourage consumers to cook and eat healthier foods by use of in-store promotions and recipe cards etc.

2. Content of food

Product Reformulation

- Gradual reduction of fat, saturated fat, salt and sugars over time whilst maintaining acceptable taste.
- Develop principles for the reduction of trans-fats, saturated fat and salt.
- Greater promotion of 1% milk and reduced sat fat dairy products.
- Consider dietary intake data and food compositional data to identify which foods are the main contributors to intakes in the population as a whole and sub-groups (especially extreme intakes) and determine priorities.
- Take forward the recommendations from the DEFRA fruit and vegetable task force, and undertake work to overcome the barriers to increased consumption i.e. fruit and vegetable criteria for composite foods.
- Increase the inclusion of fruit and vegetable in OOH kids meals.

New Product Development (NPD)

- Encourage new product development (NPD) to meet standards set for reformulation.

Regulatory Controls and Guidance

- Consider what can be done to ease reformulation and NPD constraints to the development of healthier versions of foods.
- Develop and promote guidance, advice and assistance on the production of healthier food for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).
- Identify and prioritise regulatory and licensing constraints to the production of healthier products and propose actions to minimise their effect.

3. Improving the food environment through better access to healthier food

- Encourage OOH businesses to do more to improve fruit and vegetable intakes.
- Encourage the rollout of government buying standards for food more widely across the food sector.
- Develop increased partnership working between business and local government to extend reach of healthy eating initiatives.

4. Promotion of Healthier Food Choices

- Increase the promotion of healthier foods, promote positive messages and engage young people with healthy eating through good use of NPD.
- Develop flexible guidance on how to use promotions to help shift the balance of what is in consumers' trolleys.
- Tackle in-store promotions, based on evidence from the NHF paper on mapping of voluntary principles.
- Consider taking forward a voluntary principle based approach to food marketing aimed at children.
- Tackle irresponsible marketing and promotions using new media.

- Implement recommendations of WHO marketing and advertising code to curb promotions in places where children gather.

5. Links to Other Networks

- Do more for employees via company wellness programmes
- Raise awareness of role of both diet and exercise to tackle obesity.