

Food Network Steering Group – March 15, 2011
Evaluation: Assessing pledge output and outcome

Issue

Given the limited resources available for DH funded evaluation to assess the impact of RD pledges, we need to prioritise in order to secure resources for Food Network pledges.

Proposed parameters for prioritising evaluation requirements

Below is a suggested list of broad parameters which could be used to inform discussion evaluation resource priorities, and an assessment of how each pledge meets them.

1. How close are we to meeting, public health recommendations (Far/Close)?
 - There is a case for prioritising those areas where we are further from the public health recommendations, over and above those where we are closer to meeting them or have met them.
2. Would learning from an evaluation study help inform the design of further work to meet public health recommendations (Significantly/Somewhat/Little)?
 - There is a case for prioritising those areas where evaluation is likely to significantly influence the design or implementation of further work to meet public health recommendations.
3. Might resources be available outside the agreed RD funding to evaluate impact (Y/N)?
 - Given the limited RD resources there is a case for placing less priority on those pledges that have the opportunity to seek funding from elsewhere.

	How close?	Influence on further work?	Other funding?
Cal reduction	Far	Significantly	No
F&V	Far	Significantly	No
Cal labelling	Far	Somewhat	No
Salt	Far	Significantly	Yes
TFA	Close	Somewhat	No

Additional considerations

Calorie reduction: 61.3% of adults, and 28.3% of children in England are either overweight or obese. Even if a meaningful change in intake can be achieved via a calorie reduction pledge, there will still be a need for further work to tackle obesity. The proposed calorie reduction pledge would involve comprehensive action across the sector and new models of evaluation and data analysis will need to be developed, since relevant information is not routinely collected. The only precedent for this is the Healthy Weight Commitment work in the US. The opportunity to build a new evidence base demonstrating which contributions are most effective is high.

Out-of-home calorie labelling: 61.3% of adults, and 28.3% of children in England are either overweight or obese. Whilst there are a few published studies that show calorie labelling impacts

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positively on purchasing behaviour where people see and use calorie information, evidence continues to emerge. Whilst the pledge is relatively narrow in scope, there is an opportunity to contribute to the evidence base in this area and influence future action, including take-up by other companies. The pledge takes effect from September, with some companies intending to take action some way in advance, and baseline data would need to be collected soon to support a pre-post evaluation design.

Fruit and vegetables: Current intakes of fruit and vegetables are on average below 3 portions per day. Action taken as part of the RD will not on its own enable achievement of the 5-a-day public health recommendation, so further work will be needed. It is not yet clear what scope the Food Network's action on fruit and vegetables will take, although it is likely to include a number of complementary strands undertaken by different companies, and that evaluation of this pledge could inform the design of future action.

Salt reduction: It is expected that the salt reduction pledge will deliver approximately 30% of the total salt that needs to be removed from the diet to reach the recommended 6g per day. Evaluation could inform the design of future work. NDNS data and urinary sodium analysis are funded separately to the RD, and, subject to future funding decisions, will be available to support evaluation of the impact of the salt reduction pledge.

Trans fats removal: Average intakes of trans fats in the UK are within current public health recommendations (intakes are on average just 1.6g/day compared with maximum recommended 5g/person/day), so it is not clear that significant amounts of further work will be needed in this area. The larger manufacturers have removed all bar a very few products of concern, and any further studies would need to focus on a labour-intensive consideration of a large number of SMEs.

Discussion: Does this paper set out the right prioritisation for the Food Network to use when seeking DH funding for evaluation, bearing in mind the limited resources available?