

Food Network Steering Group – March 15, 2011
The Future Work Programme Of The Food Network

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.

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

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.

Annex A gives more information on proposed actions between now and May to lay the groundwork for this pledge. The Government intends to publish, around May, a follow-on document to the public health white paper relating to obesity. There is the possibility of using this as an opportunity to drive public interest in development of the pledge.

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.

Annex B outlines the outputs of a meeting in January between DH officials and a small group of industry representatives to discuss ideas for increasing consumption of fruit and vegetables as part of the Food Network.

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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.

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.

<i>Indicative timeline for discussion</i>	
2011 – 2012	<div>March</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Launch of 3 initial pledges: salt, trans fat, OOH calorie labelling <div>May</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public announcement of calorie reduction work <div>September</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Launch of fruit and vegetables pledge
2012 – 2013	<div>Spring</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Launch of calorie reduction pledge• Start work on “non-calorie” aspects of saturated fat and promotions and/or other key issues
2013 – 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opportunity to revisit initial pledges

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ANNEX A – Immediate work on calorie reduction

Work is underway to build an evidence base and inform the design of a work programme to deliver a calorie reduction pledge. There are 3 events planned ahead of the next HLSG:

- March 21 –Expert group chaired by Ian MacDonald (SACN) to review and advise on the case for action to reduce calorie supply, by what level, and possible risks.
- April 7 –Workshop with representatives from the catering, retailer, manufacturing, NGO, and alcohol sectors to inform the design of the calorie reduction workplan, and generate enthusiasm to contribute to the ongoing work. Participants will consider issues such as:
 - What could count as contribution to calorie reduction? eg:
 - Should calorie reduction be considered for all foods or just some?
 - Should it cover alcohol?
 - How might calorie reduction be weighted across different types of foods?
 - What types of contribution can be made by: caterers and their suppliers; manufacturers; retailers; others?
 - How will we monitor progress?
 - How will we evaluate outcomes?
- May – DH publication of a follow-on document to the public health white paper in relation to obesity. There is the possibility of using this as an opportunity to drive public interest in development of the pledge.

It is anticipated that the detailed work to design and launch a comprehensive calorie reduction pledge would take us to early 2012, possibly coinciding with the anniversary of the launch of the RD.

ANNEX B – Update on fruit and vegetables

In January DH officials met with a small group of industry representatives to discuss ideas for increasing consumption of fruit and vegetables as part of the Food Network.

It considered that a pledge to create the right environment to enable and encourage people to increase their consumption of fruit and vegetables could be delivered through a menu of options reflecting the diversity of the different sectors and the range of products that can contribute.

It identified three areas where activity might be focused, including promoting fruit and vegetables through incentives and information; increasing accessibility of fruit and vegetables to all sectors of the community; and making it easier for consumers to achieve their 5 a day target. These fit well with the four pillars of the overarching work programme.