

JAMIE'S SUGAR MANIFESTO

1. MY BIG AIM: INTRODUCE THE SUGARY DRINKS TAX

I want to see the introduction of a 20p levy per litre on every soft drink containing added sugar – this equates to about 7p per 330ml can. Studies show that this could have a significant impact on health in the UK, potentially reducing obesity levels by up to 200,000 people¹, and reducing sugary drink consumption by 15%². The levy could raise revenue of up to £1 bn per year to support preventative strategies in the NHS and in schools around obesity and diet-related disease³.

Soft drinks are the largest single source of sugar consumption for school-age children and teenagers and sometimes, alarmingly, even younger children, and just one serving of these drinks may contain more than half of their recommended maximum daily sugar intake. Such drinks are a totally unnecessary calorie source and can have a significant negative impact on dental health.

To give an example, the Mexican government introduced a soda tax of 1 peso per litre in 2014, which has raised over \$1 billion USD in its first year alone. Results have shown an average reduction of 6% in the consumption of sugary drinks. The Government has since committed to ring-fencing some of this money to pay for the installation of clean drinking water fountains in schools.

2. LEGISLATE THE RESPONSIBILITY DEAL

The Responsibility Deal exists to improve public health in England. However, as it is currently a voluntary scheme made up of multiple pledges, it doesn't include any specific targets regarding the reduction of sugar in food products. Some manufacturers have committed to reduce sugar content by 5%, or reduce portion sizes, but there are currently no consistent targets relating to sugar. I believe it's much fairer that the Government set guidelines that must legally be followed, so that the journey to positive change is an equal playing field for all producers. Ultimately, penalties should be implemented for any food companies that do not reach the targets.

Many UK adults, teenagers and children, including those of nursery age, are all currently consuming more sugar than is recommended by the World Health Organisation. I support the work of Action on Sugar, a group of scientists who want to see an annual reduction of the sugar added to products by around 10% a year, culminating in a total reduction of around 40% by 2020⁴. Action on Sugar argues that reducing sugar content across the board would reduce our average calorie intake and therefore have a positive impact on reducing

¹http://www.aomrc.org.uk/doc_view/9578-british-heart-foundation-health-promotion-research-group-dept-of-public-health-oxford

² *"The 20% tax is predicted to reduce consumption of concentrated sugar sweetened drinks by 15% and non-concentrated sugar sweetened drinks by 16%." BMJ 2013;347:f6189 doi: 10.1136/bmj.f6189*

³ http://www.sustainweb.org/publications/a_childrens_future_fund/

⁴ <http://www.actiononsalt.org.uk/actiononsugar/Press%20Release%20/141202.pdf>

obesity levels. Drinks with added sugar are a clear target for sugar reduction as the process should be relatively simple.

In 2006, the successful Food Standards Agency (FSA) campaign to reduce the level of salt in our food demonstrated how effective reduction targets can be. The food and drinks industry worked closely with the FSA to significantly reduce the levels of salt in their products and ensure targets were met. Consumer acceptance of the new salt levels demonstrates how our taste receptors can adjust over time, and the same would be true for sugar.

3. BAN ALL JUNK FOOD⁵ MARKETING ON TV BEFORE 9PM & CREATE MORE ROBUST DIGITAL MARKETING REGULATIONS TO PROTECT OUR CHILDREN

In 2007, the UK regulator Ofcom introduced regulations banning the advertising of foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar on children's TV channels; and on non-children's channels before, during, and after programmes aimed at children.

However, some of our highest-rating TV shows, watched by children, are not covered by the regulations. I know that because when I sat down recently to watch *Britain's Got Talent*, which we all enjoy very much and consider a family show, I saw advertising from three major junk food retailers. These primetime shows are aimed at children *and* feature children, but aren't covered by the regulations. The regulations were put in place to protect children, but simply haven't gone far enough. Family-oriented shows like these can contain up to 11 unhealthy food adverts per hour, and frequently attract child audiences of over 1 million.^{6,7}

With Britain's children now some of the unhealthiest in Europe, and one in every three children leaving primary school either overweight or obese, I believe all marketing media should be covered by the same regulations. Non-broadcast media often has very weak or even non-existent regulations. It uses impactful techniques that children find difficult to identify as advertising, such as advergames and competitions. Encouraging children to play, possibly for long periods of time, while being fully engaged with a brand can be a powerful tool. The advertising code rules on this are totally insufficient, and aren't robust or agile enough to keep up with junk food marketing strategies and techniques.

Further discussion must occur to develop a way to determine when a product or promotion is targeting children. I support the proposal made by the British Heart Foundation and Children's Food Campaign that the responsibility for

⁵ We class junk food as foods high in fat, sugar and salt, such as soft drinks, confectionery, crisps and savoury snacks, fast food, and pre-sugared breakfast cereals

⁶ Boyland, E. J., & Halford, J. C. G. Television advertising and branding: Effects on eating behaviour and food preferences in children. *Appetite* (2012), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2012.01.032>

⁷ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/children-being-targeted-by-junk-food-ads-during-family-television-shows-research-finds-9207196.html>

Source: <https://www.bhf.org.uk/news-from-the-bhf/news-archive/2014/march/attack-of-the-junk-ads>

developing, monitoring, and evaluating advertising regulations should be moved to a body independent of the advertising industry.⁸

4. MAKE THE TRAFFIC LIGHT LABELLING SYSTEM MANDATORY FOR ALL FRONT-OF-PACK PACKAGING

With the success of the voluntary traffic light system, this is our opportunity to create and enforce one uniform language to display nutritional information on front of pack for all food and drink products in the UK. The public need a fast, clear and consistent reference point in order to make informed choices. This colour-coded system means consumers can quickly identify if a food has high, medium or low amounts of fat, saturated fat, sugars and salt – it should be made mandatory for all manufacturers to sign up. We need all big name brands in the UK that don't yet use the traffic light system on their products to get on board, now.

5. SHOW SUGAR CONTENT IN TEASPOONS ON FRONT OF PACK FOR ALL SUGARY DRINKS

I haven't met a single member of the public who doesn't agree that displaying the number of teaspoons of sugar within each sugary-drink product is a brilliantly simple idea. It's easy to understand and instantly resonates with conscious consumption. People just don't know how much sugar there is in that can or bottle, and this is by far the easiest way to express it. The traffic light system is brilliant for all food products, but knowing that there can be 13.5 teaspoons of sugar in a 500ml bottle of drink, is really useful, tangible information that will massively inform consumer choice.

⁸http://www.sustainweb.org/resources/files/other_docs/CFC_junk_food_marketing_to_children_joint_briefing_2014.pdf