

Joint Committee on Children & Youth Affairs

Wednesday 2nd May 2018

Food Dudes Healthy Eating Programme

Opening Statement by Bord Bia

Good afternoon. I would like to thank the Joint Committee on Children and Youth Affairs for this opportunity to address you and make a contribution on the topic “Tackling childhood obesity and the Food Dudes Programme” particularly in the context of the work we do in Bord Bia in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine through the Food Dudes Programme. Bord Bia is the agency responsible for promoting the consumption of horticultural produce and the marketing of Irish food and horticulture. Under its horticulture remit, Bord Bia manages and oversees implementation of the Food Dudes Programme. This is led by myself in my role as Director of Meat & Horticulture in Bord Bia. While the specific task of tackling obesity is not within the remit of Bord Bia, it is widely accepted that a healthy balanced diet with fruit and vegetables at its core is a key contributor in reducing and minimizing obesity levels – and as such the FDP can play a role in supporting programmes aimed specifically at obesity e.g. Healthy Ireland schools.

The Food Dudes Programme (FDP), is an evidence based, incentivised behaviour changing programme which was developed by Prof Fergus Lowe in Bangor University, Wales, and aims to encourage increased consumption of fruit and vegetables by primary school children by changing attitudes and cultivating a liking for fruit and vegetables. The programme is managed by Bord Bia and receives financial support from the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine and the European Union through the EU School Fruit & Vegetable Scheme.

It is based on 3 core principles the 3 “R”S which are:

- **Repeated Tasting** of raw fruit and vegetables which cultivates a liking for fruit and vegetables
- **Role Models** which take the form of cartoon characters (Food Dudes)
- **Rewards** – small prizes which incentivise the school children to take part and eat the fruit and vegetables

Through the programme portions of raw fruit and vegetable portions are provided to primary school children over an intervention period of just **16** consecutive school days (called Phase 1). The slide graphic below shows the current range of produce provided to the children.

Fruit & Veg Repeat Tasting - Phase 1 – 16 days

	&		Day 1	5	9	13
	&		Day 2	6	10	14
	&		Day 3	7	11	15
	&		Day 4	8	12	16

Supporting materials such as consumption diaries, a DVD of the Food Dude superheroes, some prizes (see graphic of examples at end of this document), certificates and school room wall charts are also provided to maintain fruit and vegetable consumption in the longer term. After the initial 16 days of produce delivery phase 2 of the programme commences which sees the focus switch to the home (which can run for a number of weeks) and which sees children bring in their own fruit & vegetable portions from home in Food Dudes lunchboxes distributed at the end of Phase 1.

The Food Dudes Boost Programme was introduced in 2015. It maintains all the key elements of the original programme but uses fewer rewards and has a stronger focus on the Junior Cycle, ensuring that the Programme can reach more children in a school year. How the programme is implemented at schools is detailed in my written submission to the Committee.

The Food Dudes Programme has been evaluated a number of times. All evaluations showed that the Food Dudes Programme effectively increased fruit and vegetables consumption amongst its target group and that a sustained pattern of eating more fruit and vegetables was established amongst participating children. The most recent evaluation was carried out in 2016 by an expert team from UCD and evaluated the long term impact of the Food Dudes Programme on schools that participated in the 2010-2011 school year. The results showed that the number of senior pupils bringing and consuming fruit and vegetables, remained significantly higher than before the Food Dudes intervention.

An interesting finding that emerged from the evaluation is that consumption rates were high at baseline and remained high at follow-up when increased portions were brought. This suggests that the majority of children ate what was provided in their lunchbox even when additional portions of fruit and vegetables were provided at follow-up. This underpins and highlights the importance of parental influence on children's eating practices in school.

As part of the EU development of a single school scheme the Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine has submitted a six year strategy to the EU for delivery of Food Dudes through the EU School Scheme. The strategy includes a period of pilot testing in the 2017/2018 school year of some new elements/activities that might supplement the core elements of Food Dudes Boost in future years, such as gardening activity, healthy eating days/weeks, project work related to healthy eating, on line activities, sport linked activities etc. It is envisaged that the additional aspects will be particular relevant to senior class children. The prime motivation and criterion of success will remain increased consumption of fruit and vegetables.

Food Dudes Fruit & Veg Lunch Box



Food Dudes Prizes

