



Food Drink Ireland submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Children and Youth Affairs

11 May 2018

Food Drink Ireland

Food Drink Ireland (FDI) is the main trade association for the food and drink industry in Ireland. It represents over 150 food, drink and non-food grocery manufacturers and suppliers.

Nutrition

The McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) studied 74 interventions to address obesity in 18 areas that are being discussed or piloted around the world. It conducted a meta-analysis of research available. Of the 74 interventions, MGI were able to gather sufficient evidence to estimate what might be the potential cost and impact of 44 interventions. On the basis of this analysis, MGI has developed a perspective on what it might take to start to reverse rising obesity prevalence in a developed market. It found the interventions that had the highest level of impact across total population were portion control and reformulation.

a. Portion size

Food Drink Ireland (FDI) recognises the importance of portion sizes and the key role it plays in achieving a balanced diet.

Food companies have been amending package size to positively impact on dietary intake. FDI is currently in the process of capturing industry's efforts for the first time. This report will be published at the end of 2018.

The food industry has continually been providing consumers with information so that they can make informed choices. For example, in 2005, industry pioneered the concept of front of pack nutrition labelling through the then called Guideline Daily Amounts (GDAs). The GDA scheme provides nutrition information on a per portion basis. In 2013, in view of the changing EU legislation, industry reaffirmed its commitment to encourage consistent and harmonised nutrition labelling on the front of pack of food and drink products with the introduction of "Reference Intakes" ("RI").

b. Reformulation

In 2016, the Irish food industry became the first in the world to publish exact details about the impact of industry reformulation. The FDI/Creme Global Reformulation Report was launched by then Minister for Health, Leo Varadkar, TD, and proved conclusively the positive impact industry efforts have had on consumption.

It showed that during the seven years (2005 – 2012) covered by the research:

- * Salt content of the products analysed reduced by 37%;
- * Sugar content fell by 14%;
- * The amount of energy as measured in calories sold over the seven years to 2012 reduced by 12%;
- * Both total fat and saturated fat intake reduced by approximately 10%

Beverage members took 10 billion calories out of the annual Irish diet between 2005 and 2012. 10 percent of all sugar contributed to the Irish diet by soft drinks was also reduced in these seven years. This was achieved through voluntary action years ahead of the

Department of Health's call to work with industry on a roadmap for reformulation targets. The beverage industry has dynamically reduced sugar content through voluntary innovation alone.

Phase two of the FDI reformulation project is underway and results of the positive work undertaken by FDI members will be published in late 2018.

'The Healthy Lunch Club' is an example of an educational campaign to help combat childhood obesity. This initiative was established by the Irish Bread Bakers Association. It is designed to help teachers educate children on healthy lunchtime options by way of increasing the consumption of fibre, protein, fruit and vegetables.

National Workplace Wellbeing

a. National Workplace Wellbeing Day

The annual National Workplace Wellbeing Day, set up by FDI, is in its fifth consecutive year, over 600 businesses got involved in 2018. Since 2013, there has been a 20% increase year on year. The target for 2019 is to get 1,000 companies signed up and taking part in National Workplace Wellbeing Day.

b. The KeepWell Mark

Ibec believes in the importance of health and wellbeing in the workplace. That is why The KeepWell Mark was introduced. It is an evidence-based accreditation that recognises and celebrates organisations that put the wellbeing of employees at the forefront of company policy. With our standards of excellence and the roll out of this initiative across participating organisations, we can make Ireland's workplace a safer and healthier one.

The KeepWell Mark is based on a UK model that is endorsed by Public Health England. It was launched by Minister for Health, Simon Harris, TD, in Ibec in September 2017.

While these initiatives are designed for an older audience, research undertaken this year showed that positive steps taken in the workplace effect behavioural change at home. Evidence suggests that family members influence the lifestyle choices made by individuals so increasing the diet and nutritional knowledge and understanding of Ireland's workers will positively impact on people of all ages, including children.

Responsible food marketing

In October 2015, then Minister for Health Leo Varadkar announced the appointment of Professor Alan Reilly to chair a working group to develop a code of practice for food marketing, promotion and sponsorship.

The working group included representatives from the Department of Health, the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine, Food Drink Ireland, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, the Association of Advertisers in Ireland, the Institute of Advertisers in Ireland, the Food Safety Promotion Board (SafeFood), Healthy Food For All, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, the HSE and the Department of Health.

On the 14 February 2018 Minister of State for Health Promotion, Catherine Byrne, TD, launched the voluntary Codes.

FDI welcomed the publication by Minister Catherine Byrne. Food and beverage companies are committed to responsible marketing.

The focus now must be on effective implementation. FDI calls on the Minister to quickly bring together the key participants to develop the promised technical guidance document which advertisers, rights owners, media outlets and advertising practitioners now need to bring the Voluntary Codes of Practice to life.

It is also important to note that these codes sit alongside and complement existing voluntary and statutory measures with which industry complies, to ensure the responsible marketing of food to the public. These include the EU Pledge, company internal codes of conduct, the Advertising Standards Authority of Ireland (ASAI) Code of Standards for Advertising and Marketing Communications in Ireland and the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) General Children's Commercial Communications Code.

Food labelling

Food Information to the Consumers (FIC) is defined as "information concerning a food and made available to the final consumer by means of a label, other accompanying material, or any other means including modern technology tools or verbal communication."

FIC enables consumers to make informed choices on the food they decide to consume.

New rules on the provision of FIC became applicable on 13 December 2014 (Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011). The Regulation established general principles, requirements and responsibilities governing food information and food labelling.

Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 combines 2 Directives into one legislation:

- 2000/13/EC - Labelling, presentation and advertising of foodstuffs (applicable until 12 December 2014)
- 90/496/EEC - Nutrition labelling for foodstuffs.

Obesity – the whole of school approach

Any single intervention is likely to have only a small overall impact on its own. FDI welcomes the Government's whole of school approach in 'A Healthy Weight for Ireland Obesity Policy and Action Plan 2016-2025'. However, government could be investing in measures such as Home Economics classes, school sports clubs, access to green spaces and better infrastructure to allow for cycling and walking to and from school.

Industry has a longstanding unerring commitment to improving public health outcomes including childhood obesity. The voluntary code of practice for food marketing, promotion and sponsorship is an example of how a collaborative approach with government and key stakeholders has brought about realistic and ultimately effective results.