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**From the Chair,
Dame Deirdre Hutton CBE**



**FOOD
STANDARDS
AGENCY**

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29 June 2006

**RESPONSE TO OFCOM CONSULTATION "TV ADVERTISING OF FOOD AND DRINK
PRODUCTS TO CHILDREN: OPTIONS FOR NEW RESTRICTIONS"**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this consultation. The Agency is extremely concerned about the imbalance in many children's diets and the effect this can have on their health and wellbeing, and welcomes Ofcom's engagement with this crucial public health issue. We recognise that TV ads are one of a range of influences on children's diets and that Ofcom's actions are necessarily part of a wider programme of work to encourage healthier lifestyles.

We are disappointed, however, with the three options set out in the consultation document. In our view none of them adequately addresses the issue. The evidence base on the impact promotional activity on children, as set out in the Agency commissioned Hastings¹ review,

¹ Review of research on the effects of food promotion to children: Hastings et al September 2003



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included studies involving children aged 2-15 years, yet the emphasis in the consultation document is on protecting children aged nine years and younger. We consider that the action taken must also protect older children. We therefore support a pre 9pm watershed ban on advertisements for food high in fat, salt or sugar, as we consider this offers a practical means of extending protection to older age groups which is consistent with other broadcasting controls.

We are also concerned that only one of the options set out in the consultation document uses the Agency's nutrient profiling model to make sure the new restrictions only apply to advertising of foods high in fat, salt or sugar. We can not support any approach that would restrict the advertising of healthier foods as this would be in direct conflict with efforts to promote healthy eating to children. Furthermore, without the use of a nutrient profiling approach there is no incentive for industry to reformulate their products to reduce their fat, saturated fat, salt and/or sugar content.

Finally, I trust that any potentially viable 'fourth option', which emerges during the consultation period will be subject to consultation with other interested parties before adoption.

I am copying this letter to Caroline Flint, Minister of State for Public Health, and Shaun Woodward, Minister for Creative Industries and Tourism. It will also be published on our website.

Yours sincerely
Deirdre

DAME DEIRDRE HUTTON