

# Government's National Food Strategy proposes to introduce salt tax, reformulate the sugar tax and cut down on animal protein



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The millionaire founder of restaurant chain Leon, [Henry Dimbleby](#), has been tasked by Boris Johnson to make recommendations on the reduction of fat, sugar, salt and red meat consumption as part of the Government's [National Food Strategy](#), published today.

In a bid to get the nation healthy and combat the climate crisis, or as stated in the report "escape the junk food cycle and protect the NHS", the Food Strategy has made a number of propositions, including adding a levy of £6 per kilo of salt and £3 per kilo of sugar whilst using public funds to help low income families to access fresh fruit and vegetables.

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Levy to be expanded to include other sugary foods such as sweets and biscuits. .

According to the Government's research, the sugar and salt tax would lower the average sugar intake by 4–10g per person per day, and the salt intake by 0.2–0.6g per person per day, resulting in an average daily calories reduction eaten per person of 15–38 kcal, which would help people lose weight in the long run.

Clearly outlined in the document is the need to tackle obesity, a serious problem in the UK where at least 63% of adults are overweight, 28% are classified as obese and poor diet contributes to 64,000 yearly deaths.

"One study has estimated that every unit of body mass index put on by every individual raises the UK's annual healthcare costs by £16.3." states the document. "As things stand, obesity is expected to continue increasing. By 2035/36, Type 2 diabetes is projected to cost the NHS £15 billion a year, or one and a half times as much as cancer does today. Halting this trajectory is the single biggest thing we can do to protect the future of our health service. Education and willpower are not enough. We cannot escape this vicious circle without rebalancing the financial incentives within the food system."

The Government also wants large food companies, including retailers, restaurants and quick service companies, to publish an annual report on:

- Sales of food and drink high in **fat, sugar or salt (HFSS)** excluding alcohol
- Sales of protein by type (of meat, dairy, fish, plant, or alternative protein) and origin
- Sales of vegetables
- Sales of fruit
- Sales of major nutrients: fibre, saturated fat, sugar and salt
- Food waste
- Total food and drink sales

The strategy also suggests a creation of a National Food System Data Programme to gather data, so that food business and organisations can track progress and plan a future course of action. The system would track data on land, production, distribution, retail, and the impact on the environment and the nation's health.

The document says that the advent of COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of reliable and accurate data collection, to understand infection and hospitalisation rates, and the reasons behind regional disparities.

The report also wants to introduce an initiative in schools, called Eat and Learn, to teach children culinary skills and reintroduce the Food subject at A levels. Eligibility for free school meals would also be extended and it advises that children should eat less meat, more fruit and vegetables, more fibre and fewer foods high in saturated fat, salt and sugar.

Jimmy Pierson, Director of ProVeg UK, who were consulted by the National Food Strategy team, said: *"This ground-breaking strategy is a huge stride forward for school children, who*

*"We now strongly encourage the government to redesign the Government Buying Standards for Food in line with the recommendations to encourage the public sector to serve less meat and dairy and more wholegrains, fruit, vegetables and pulses.", he adds. "And we look forward to the outcome of the ongoing update of the School Food Standards and hope, in light of the report's ambitious meat-reduction target, to see the removal of the requirement to serve meat at least three times a week and dairy every day."*

In a bid to improve sustainability the report calls for a budget for agricultural payments until at least 2029 to help farmers transition to more sustainable land use, as well as setting a trade standard with other countries to ensure that environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards are not compromised.

The proposal also pledges £1 billion in 'innovation to create a better food system' to " be used to help shift the national diet to meet the targets...This might include accelerating work to reformulate processed foods, trying out new ways of helping customers change their habits, and boost locally led initiatives to improve diet and health. But it should also be used to help develop new ways of growing food, such as vertical farming and precision fermentation".

Designed to be implemented over the next three years, the strategy also proposes cutting down on greenhouse gases by using methane reduction technologies, like feed additives for cows and sheep and to cut back on the consumption of animal proteins.

Whilst the proposal doesn't set out to introduce a meat tax – a move which would have proved unpopular with meat producers and consumers – it pledges £50 million to be used to build shared facilities for the development of alternative proteins, to help start-ups and scientists develop non animal derived produce.

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