

# The Kid's Food Guarantee

What do retailers need to do to support families through the cost of living crisis?



# Why must retailers take action to support families?

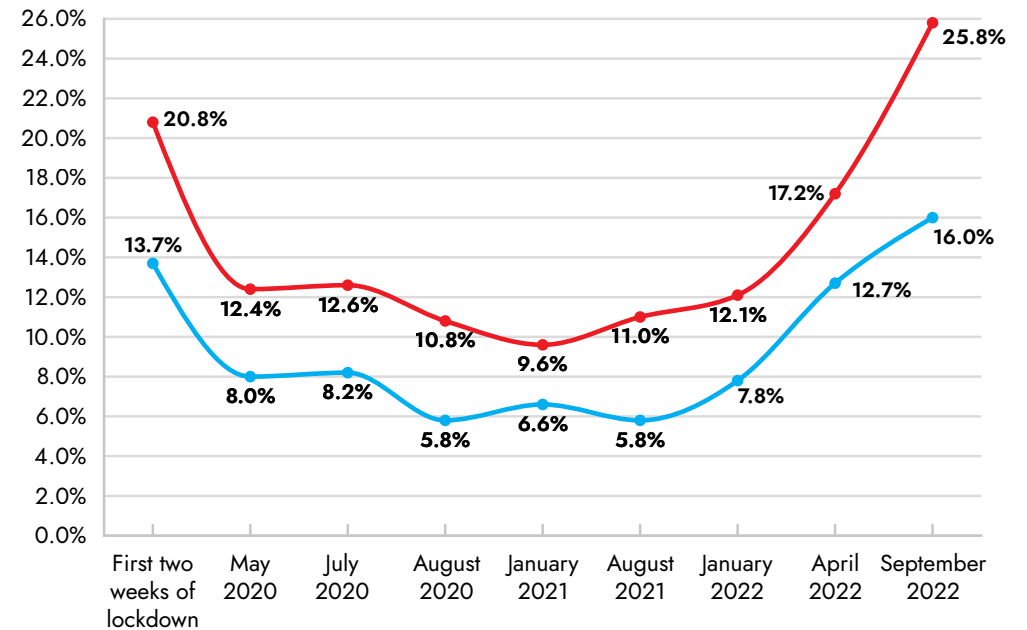
Inflation is at its highest level for four decades. In the 12 months to January 2023 food insecurity among children doubled. This will impact on UK diets with a number of health consequences – particularly for low income families who bear the brunt of price rises. Purchasing shifts which happened during the 2008 recession showed that the crisis resulted in people shifting to cheaper calories with both good and bad dietary outcomes (good for grain and red meat intakes, less so for veg and consumption of sugary foods). This means there is an opportunity to use the crisis to push for lasting dietary changes, as well as an urgent need to act so that those most at risk do not see the quality of their diets rapidly deteriorating due to cost pressures. Moreover, there is growing evidence that customers are becoming increasingly price conscious with **cost increasingly trumping brand loyalty**. These expectations therefore also align with commercial pressures – where businesses are investing in price this ought not to be at the expense of health.

## Food insecurity has increased more in households with children

Percentage of households experiencing food insecurity\*

■ With children  
■ Without children

\* 1-month recall period



### Supermarkets ought to ensure that they are doing all they can to:

1. Help families who are on very low incomes to secure an adequate diet
2. Support families who are not in the poorest category, but are shifting their purchasing because of cost pressures, to switch to healthier and more sustainable options with benefits that outlast the current crisis. Trading down oughtn't mean that health is sacrificed for price.

## What action is needed by supermarkets?

We have identified a set of actions (called the Kids Food Guarantee) which we think supermarkets should have in place as a minimum if we are to effectively tackle rising levels of food insecurity. These are actions that citizens have told us they are eager to see. These are:

### 1. AN AFFORDABLE RANGE OF FRUIT AND VEG

**Why?** Consumption of fruit and veg is where the widest dietary inequalities are seen between high and low income families, with those on the **lowest income consuming on average one portion of veg less per day than those on the highest**. Low levels of fruit and veg consumption have a direct impact on **disease outcomes**. Evidence from the 2008 crisis showed that **vegetable consumption fell**. There is growing **evidence** from reported consumer behaviour in the last year that people are buying less fruit and veg.

### 2. HELP WITH STAPLE FOODS

**Why?** There's a strong body of **evidence** that shows the impact multi-buys have on purchases. Additionally, the government have made a policy commitment to regulate multi-buys on less healthy foods. There is also growing **evidence** that low-cost staples have risen in price more steeply than average food inflation has. **This is a particular issue for first infant formula milk**, where there is currently only one own-brand

formula on the market and the cost of the most widely available and purchased infant formulas have increased in cost by 15-23% last year. Families who cannot afford increasingly expensive infant formula may resort to **unsafe practices**, putting their baby's health at risk.

### 3. HEALTHY OPTIONS IN KIDS' FOOD CATEGORIES BEING THE MOST AFFORDABLE

**Why?** Breakfast cereals and yogurts are foods that parents are often likely to give their children in the belief that they are a relatively healthy option. However, only 7% of breakfast cereals and 4% of yogurts marketed to children are currently **low in sugar**.

### 4. SUPPORT WITH KIDS' PACKED LUNCHES

**Why?** A large number of children do not receive a free school meal, with 800,000 children

living in poverty currently not eligible for the scheme. They must pay for a school meal or bring in a packed lunch to try and save money. **Research** shows that on average only a tiny proportion of packed lunches (<2%) meet the nutritional standards of school food.

**These expectations align with other actions which supermarkets have taken to support children's access to good food including;** support for Healthy Start, Free School Meals and Holiday food provision via the **End Child Food Poverty** campaign, as well as existing reformulation programmes and the longer-term commitments which several supermarkets have made to shift sales in favour of health and sustainability outcomes.

The actions we would like to see align with **the food ladder approach** to improving food security. Rather than actions designed only to catch those at risk of food insecurity (e.g. food donations to food banks) which are categorised as a rung one intervention, they instead aim to capacity build to enable social innovation (rung two) and target structural changes within the food environment.





## Consumers want to see these measures in place

As part of the Food Foundation's latest food insecurity survey with YouGov in January 2023, we asked lower income families (CD2E) with children what would be helpful for them in feeding their children well. They said:

**87%** Have a range of fruit and veg available at discounted prices

**87%** Put offers and promotions on staple foods like bread, milk etc

**79%** Make the healthiest children's yogurts and cereals the cheapest option

**78%** Make budget ranges available in every store including local and convenience stores

**64%** Offer a lunchbox meal deal so that I can easily buy items to make up a week of healthy lunchboxes for my child(ren)

**55%** Put inspirational ideas for cooking healthy meals at the checkout

**53%** Reduce minimum spend for online grocery delivery

### HOW WE WILL MONITOR WHETHER THE ACTIONS ARE IN PLACE

For six months, starting in March, we will spot-check each of the guarantees in collaboration with the QuestionMark and Which? to see where the best offers are for families and share the findings every fortnight. The intention is that the findings can be used by consumers, supporting them to access healthy and affordable diets and helping them to navigate the cost of living crisis.

We intend to highlight examples of best practice both in the press and as part of our forthcoming 2023 State of the Food Industry report.





# The Food Foundation Kids Food Guarantee

Actions to guarantee that children can eat well during the cost-of-living crisis and prevent lasting damage to their health and wellbeing

## Make essentials affordable

### 1 Fruit and Veg Guarantee

Ensure that at least a week's worth of 5 a day (>10 different products, fresh, frozen or tinned) are competitively priced and available at all stores.



### 2 Staples Guarantee

- Guarantee multibuy deals on carbohydrate staples not on HFSS foods
- Guarantee wholegrain and/or 50:50 wheat products are at price parity or at a lower price to the refined equivalent
- Guarantee budget ranges are available in every store, including local and convenience
- Offer an own brand formula and/or insulate prices on first infant formulas from the worst of inflation.



## Support health for those feeling the squeeze

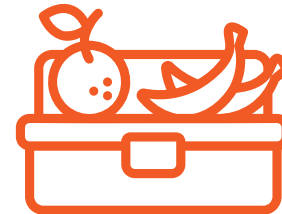
### 3 Kids Categories Guarantee

Guarantee that the healthiest products (with the lowest NPM score) in two key kid's categories responsible for the majority of sugar intake is the cheapest per 100g: yogurts & boxed breakfast cereals.



### 4 Lunch box Guarantee

Lunchbox meal deal. Offer weekly lunchbox items that are compliant with School Food standards and make up 5 lunches that can be bought through a multibuy deal.



## Rebalance shopping baskets

### 5 Act for a healthier, more sustainable future

- Advocate for the expansion of the Healthy Start scheme
- Promote and communicate the Healthy Start scheme
- Rebalance advertising so that a greater % of promotions, marketing and campaigns are focused on healthier and more sustainable staple foods such as fruit and veg, pulses and wholegrains



# What does good look like?

## 1 MAKE ESSENTIALS AFFORDABLE

### Fruit and veg guarantee.

Ensure that at least a week's worth of 5 a day (>10 different products, fresh, frozen or tinned) are:

- competitively priced, for example matched to discounter prices
- and available at all stores.

*Supports: sales targets around increasing volume sales of fruit and veg and % healthier foods, performance on fruit and veg as assessed by the likes of Peas Please and Plating Up Progress*

### Staples guarantee

- Guarantee multibuy deals are on carbohydrate staple foods not on HFSS foods (potatoes, pasta, bread, rice etc)
- Guarantee wholegrain and/or 50:50 wheat products are priced at a lower or equivalent price to the refined equivalent
- Ensure that budget ranges are available at all stores, including local and express store formats
- Offer an own brand first infant milk formula and/or insulate first milk formula prices from above average inflation

*Supports: HFSS regulations around promotional deals, wholegrain initiatives such as the FDF's Action on Fibre programme, Healthy Start recipients who are struggling to afford formula with the available funds, Which?'s 10 point plan for retailers*

## 2 SUPPORT HEALTH FOR THOSE FEELING THE SQUEEZE

### Reducing sugar in key kid's categories

Guarantee that own-brand and branded products with the lowest NPM score for yogurt and boxed cereals (two key categories responsible for the majority of children's sugar intake) is the cheapest per 100g

*Supports: reformulation programmes, voluntary calorie and sugar reduction commitments*

### Healthy lunchboxes

Lunchbox meal deal. Offer weekly lunchbox items that are compliant with School Food standards and make up 5 lunches that can be bought through a multibuy deal.

*Supports: children's health, builds brand loyalty among families with children, plugs the gaps in the Free School Meal eligibility criteria*

## 3 REBALANCING SHOPPING BASKETS FOR A HEALTHIER AND MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Advocate for the expansion of the Healthy Start scheme; promote the Healthy Start scheme to customers; rebalance advertising so that a greater % of promotions, marketing and campaigns are focused on healthier foods such as fruit and veg, pulses and wholegrains

*Supports: the number of HS vouchers redeemed in retail stores, performance on advertising and marketing as assessed by the likes of Plating Up Progress and ATNI*



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