

## The Food Foundation: Broken Plate report 2026

The Food Foundation's Broken Plate is an annual deep dive into the state of our food system and the impact it is having on our health and our environment. The report explores the disconnect between the recommended diet needed to achieve the country's health and sustainability goals, versus the reality of which foods are affordable, available and marketed to the public. The case is clear – we are paying the price for a food system that has been neglected for years. It's time to put access to affordable, healthy and sustainable food at the heart of policymaking, to support health, wealth and the economy.

### We are calling on the Government to:

- **Urgently progress the policies committed to in the 10 Year Plan, such as mandatory reporting, without further delay**
- **Provide a support package for low-income families to afford healthy and sustainable food, as part of the response to cost-of-living pressures**
- **Introduce a Good Food Bill to provide long-term security and protection for citizens and farmers alike**

### Affordability

- **Cost of healthy food:** Healthier food remains nearly twice as expensive per calorie as less healthy food, and the gap is widening.
- **Affordability of a healthy diet:** Households with children in the lowest income quintile would need to spend 85% of their disposable income on food to afford the Eatwell Guide.
- **Price of sustainable protein alternatives:** Pre-prepared and convenient plant-based alternative food products are, on average, 56% more expensive than equivalent meat products.

### What needs to happen

- Ensure benefit and wage levels cover the cost of a healthy and sustainable diet and are increased in line with inflation.
- Strengthen nutritional safety net schemes such as Healthy Start that support low-income children and families.
- Invest in community initiatives and social infrastructure that support access to affordable, healthy and sustainable food for everyone.
- Introduce a new levy on unhealthy food that incentivises manufacturers to make food healthier while also raising revenue that can be invested back into supporting access to and affordability of healthy and sustainable food.

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## Availability

- **Places to buy food:** Fast-food outlets make up 1 in 4 places to buy food in England, rising to over 1 in 3 in the most deprived areas.
- **Sugar and fibre in children's breakfast cereals:** Only 1 in 10 children's breakfast cereals are high in fibre, but 1 in 5 are high in sugar.

## What needs to happen

- Further strengthen local authority planning powers to curb the proliferation of unhealthy fast-food outlets and provide support to local authorities to do this.
- Rapidly introduce mandatory reporting of healthy sales and fruit and veg sales for all large businesses – to incentivise change and identify where new policies are needed – as a first step towards new healthy sales targets.
- Improve the availability of healthy food options – to support access to healthy and sustainable diets for everyone.

## Appeal

- **Promotions on unhealthy food:** 40% of food and non-alcoholic drink promotions are on food high in fat, salt or sugar.
- **Advertising expenditure on food:** Fruit and vegetables only account for 3% of traditional advertising food and non-alcoholic drink expenditure, yet unhealthy foods account for at least 29%.
- **Marketing of infant food:** 74% of baby and toddler snacks with a front-of-pack claim still have medium or high levels of sugar.

## What needs to happen

- Expand legislation on volume-price promotions to also include price promotions and expand the number of categories included to ensure full coverage of HFSS foods.
- Expand current advertising regulations to include brand advertising and outdoor advertising.
- Monitor the impact of voluntary guidance on commercial baby food marketing and be prepared to legislate if the situation does not improve within the 18-month deadline.
- Ensure the new Nutrient Profiling Model is applied to existing and new policies – such as advertising, promotions and healthy food standards – in a timely manner.

## Health outcomes

- **Childhood obesity:** In an average English Reception class of 30 children, three will be living with obesity. In Year 6, this more than doubles to seven children.

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- **Childhood height:** 10-year-olds from the most deprived background are over 1.5 times more likely to have short stature.
- **Tooth decay:** More than 1 in 5 five-year-olds in England have tooth decay, rising to 1 in 3 in the most deprived areas.
- **Healthy life expectancy:** Healthy life expectancy is at its lowest level since 2013-15, with a nearly 20-year gap between the least and most deprived areas.

### Diet outcomes

- **Children's diets:** Fewer than 1 in 10 teenagers eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, while 95% consume above the recommended levels of sugar.
- **Micronutrient intakes:** People in the most deprived groups are more than twice as likely to have diets lacking in three or more key micronutrients compared to those in the least deprived groups.

### Environmental outcomes

- **Emissions footprint:** The food system is lagging behind: emissions are down just 22% since 2008, compared to a 41% drop across the UK economy.
- **Deforestation footprint:** An estimated 204km<sup>2</sup> – an area larger than Glasgow – was deforested in 2023 to procure agricultural products linked to the UK economy.

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