

POLITICS OF FOOD

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Health
Environment/Climate Change
Class
Culture
Capitalism



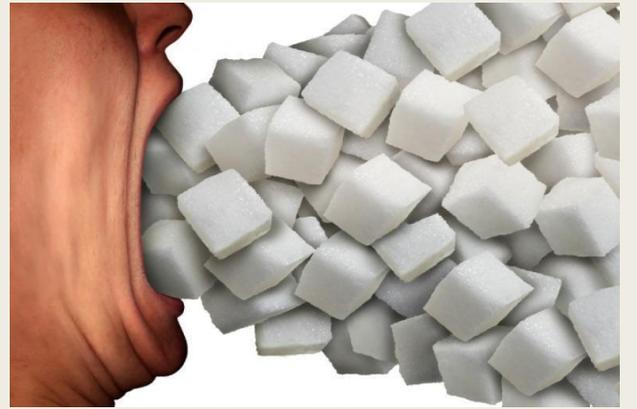
Bad Food Britain in Numbers

- 1 in every 4 British households no longer have a table that everyone can eat around
- 57 % of British men have little interest in food
- 38 % of British women have little interest in food
- 1 out of 3 Britons say they do not eat vegetables because they require too much effort to prepare
- 50% of Britons who really enjoy eating
- 2003 the year by which Britain ate more ready meals than the rest of Europe together
- 40% of patients entering and leaving British hospitals in 2004 with malnutrition, in nursing homes it is 60%
- 40% of food bought in Britain is never eaten
- 35p the average spend on food ingredients for school meals

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- 48% of Britons are fed up of being told what to eat
- 4/10 Britons enjoy eating meals with their children
- 69% of Britons still confused about what food is healthy
- 1/2 meals eaten alone
- 50% of Britons don't care where their food comes from
- 2020 the year by which at least a third of all British adults, one fifth of British boys and one third of British girls will be obese, if current trends continue
- Britain eats more than half of all crisps and savoury snacks eaten in Europe
- odds of being obese more than twice as high when young people reported seeing junk food ads daily compared with when they did not remember seeing any such adverts in the last month
- young people in the top 20% for deprivation were more likely to recall seeing junk food adverts on television every day than the least deprived 20%

Case Study: Big Sugar



- sugar industry funded research in the 1960s that looked into the effects of sugar consumption— and then buried the data when it suggested it could be harmful
- sugar industry launched a campaign in the 1960s to counter “negative attitudes toward sugar” in part by funding sugar research that could produce favourable results
- secretly paid two influential Harvard scientists to publish a major review paper in 1967 that minimized the link between sugar and heart health and shifted blame to saturated fat
- confidential tobacco memo described Mr. Hickson as “a supreme scientific politician who had been successful in condemning cyclamates, on behalf of the Sugar Research Council, on somewhat shaky evidence”

Case Study 2: Junk Food



- junk foods are the largest source of calories in the American diet
- Topping the list are grain-based desserts like cookies, doughnuts and granola bars
- largely the products of seven crops and farm foods — corn, soybeans, wheat, rice, sorghum, milk and meat — that are heavily subsidized by the federal government, ensuring that junk foods are cheap and plentiful
- “Taxpayers are paying for the privilege of making our country sick.”
- subsidies program was started decades ago in part to support struggling farmers and to secure America’s food supply
- the farm bill is renewed by Congress every five years; the version approved in 2014 called for \$956 billion in spending

Case study 3: Coca Cola in China

- shaped China's policies towards its growing obesity crisis, encouraging a focus on exercise rather than diet and thereby safeguarding its drinks sales
- exerted its influence since 1999 through a Chinese offshoot of an institute founded in the US by the then Coca-Cola vice-president Alex Malaspina with substantial company funding
- 42.3% of Chinese adults were overweight or obese in 2011, up from 20.5% in 1991.
- Population of 1.4 billion people constitute Coca-Cola's third-largest market by volume.



Interactive session

What does Politics of Food mean?



What should Politicians do?

- political leaders and civil society must step up to counter the commercial interests and lobbying of the food industry
- the food industry as a whole should set targets to reduce average calories by 20% for convenience foods such as pizzas by 2024 (Public Health England)
- Fizz Free February (Southwark Council) and other local authority initiatives
- monitoring and naming and shaming if manufacturers fail to meet targets
- a UN treaty along the lines of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control to support countries in drawing up sustainable and healthy food policies
- remove subsidies for agriculture and transport that contribute to poor diet and health
- fund for civil society organisations that want to take on the food industry (e.g. Mexican NGO El Poder Del Consumidor, which successfully fought for taxes on soft drinks, funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies.)