



THE
CORONARY
PREVENTION
GROUP

PRESS RELEASE

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Government ‘not serious’ about improving Britain’s diet

The British government has done too little to tackle Britain’s poor dietary habits, with more than seven out of ten middle-aged adults overweight and nearly half suffering high blood pressure, according to the UK Coronary Prevention Group. In a report issued today, the charity identifies a wide range of measures which would help improve population dietary patterns and urges government to take their duties seriously.

“We have identified 200 opportunities for taking a grip on UK food supplies and helping consumers, especially those on lower incomes, to make healthier choices,” said chair of the trustees, Professor Philip James. “From better public food services to investment in research, from fast food menus to food company contracts, government can and must play a critical role in shaping the quality, availability and pricing of our food.”

The report urges greater use of techniques such as nutrient profiling to evaluate and assess the likely impact of government policies. It identifies examples of projects that undermine good health because they were not subjected to a nutrient profiling, including:

- £86,472 public funds to help companies make confectionery wafer biscuits
- £31,000 public grant to help a farmer convert a barn into an ice cream shop
- £637,812 to help a company improve its chocolate blending equipment
- £24,750 grant to develop 3-D chocolate printing for ‘personalised gifts’.

‘Some of these grants are greater than the amounts spent by local health services tackling overweight in adults and children,’ said Professor James. ‘And there are anomalies with the application of VAT – table salt is zero-rated, so are cake-mixes and drinking chocolates, but you have to pay standard rate VAT on roast almonds, dried fruit and mineral water, even though these are much better for you.’

Professor Eric Brunner of University College London and a Coronary Prevention Group trustee, said ‘A recent shopping survey suggests consumption of sugar and saturated fat has started to climb back upwards. The voluntary approach to food and health policy, based on ‘Responsibility Deals’ with the food industry has failed.’

The report calls for joined up policies on health, and urges a root and branch analysis of government policies and their impact on health. ‘The government has stated its support for ‘health in all policies’ but we have seen little evidence that it is taking this seriously,’ said Professor James. ‘As the parties line up for an election, we need to know where they stand and what they will do.’

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Notes: The report *Nutrient Profiling: Changing the food of Britain* is published on March 13th 2015 by the charity The Coronary Prevention Group in association with the World Obesity Federation, at www.worldobesity.org. A shorter Briefing Paper is also available.

Professor James is available on 07718 903336 and Professor Brunner is available on 07947 028787