



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

5th April 2023

Dear Catherine,

RE: PROCESSED FOOD

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of the Soil Association's 'Taking the Biscuit' campaign. I have read your comments with interest.

I appreciate the depth of your concern about the issues raised in this campaign. Although there is no universally agreed definition of ultra-processed foods, there are clear health risks to a diet high in foods classified as processed, with an increased risk of obesity and developing chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.

The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN), which provides recommendations on dietary guidelines, is currently carrying out a scoping review of the evidence on processed foods and health. SACN aims to publish its initial assessment in the summer of 2023.

I understand that the campaign would like to see the 'Good Choice' badge removed from ultra-processed products, but I am assured that the 'Good Choice' badge is underpinned by nutrition criteria that determine which products can display the badge. Both the 'Good Choice' app and the wider 'Better Health' campaign recognise that for many families, shifting towards the healthiest options may require more than one move.

A range of important research on obesity is funded by the Department of Health and Social Care through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). Current projects include the NIHR Obesity Policy Research Unit investigating the factors that drive parental decisions regarding food provision for infants across different income levels.

More eligible low-income families are now able to access fresh fruit and vegetables through the 'Healthy Start Scheme', since the value of the vouchers was increased from £3.10 to £4.25 a week in April 2021.

I am satisfied that the Government is taking a number of active steps to reduce levels of calories in products with high levels of salt, sugar and fat, but I recognise that there is more that can be done.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE