

Third year of industry progress to reduce sugar published

Public Health England (PHE) has published [new data](#) showing how much progress the food and drink industry has made in reducing sugar in products that contribute most to children's sugar intakes.

The voluntary ambitions are set by government and form a vital part of measures to tackle obesity by making healthier choices easier and more accessible for families.

Consuming too much sugar can lead to weight gain with most adults and children in England consuming more than double the maximum recommended daily amount. Two-thirds of adults are overweight or obese and 1 in 3 children are overweight or obese by the time they start secondary school.

Tackling obesity is an urgent national priority with growing evidence that being heavily overweight can increase people's risk of serious illness from coronavirus (COVID-19). Each year, the NHS spends an estimated £6.1 billion treating overweight and obesity related ill-health.

In 2016, the food and hospitality industry were challenged by government to reduce sugar by 20% in foods that contribute most to children's sugar consumption, as part of efforts to tackle obesity.

Achieving this ambition can happen through reformulating products to reduce sugar levels, reducing portion size or shifting consumer purchasing towards lower sugar products.

The [latest report](#) shows mixed progress across a range of food categories and sectors:

- retailer and manufacturer branded breakfast cereals and yogurts and fromage frais have seen some of the biggest falls in sales weighted average sugar – around 13% – between the baseline (2015) and year 3 (2019)
- sugar levels in chocolate and sweet confectionery are relatively unchanged, while product sales have increased, growing 16% and 7% respectively between 2015 and 2019
- average overall sugar reduction across all food categories stands at 3%

The latest report also finds that marginal progress has been made in reducing sugar in products purchased and consumed in the eating out of home sector, such as cakes and puddings purchased from restaurants or cafes, although calories in these products have declined.

Sugar reduction progress is reported by PHE for the first time for unsweetened juices including smoothies and sweetened milk based drinks, such as milkshakes. These were added to the voluntary programme, in 2018, as they can contribute significantly to children's sugar and calorie consumption.

Most retailer and manufacturer branded drinks have reduced sugar levels by at least 10% already with pre-packed sweetened milk based drinks reducing sugar by more than a fifth (22%).

The report also highlights the success of the Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL) with average sugar levels in drinks subject to the levy falling by 44% between 2015 and 2019 for retailers and manufacturers. Overall, sugar consumed through these products has fallen even as sales have increased.

Jo Churchill, Public Health Minister, said:

“On sugar reduction, particularly in products like breakfast cereals, yogurts and ice cream, we have achieved some much needed progress. This will make it easier for everyone to make healthier choices, but it’s clear more can be done.

“COVID-19 has highlighted obesity and how important it is to tackle it. Our recent announcement of the obesity strategy includes world-leading measures, such as a TV watershed for advertising food and drinks high in fat, salt and sugar, and consulting on how we can introduce a ban online. If more action is needed to support individuals to lead a healthy life, we will go further to help them.”

Dr Alison Tedstone, Chief Nutritionist at PHE, said:

“Too much sugar is bad for our health and most of us are consuming more than we need, often without realising it.

“We’ve continued to see some progress in reducing sugar in a number of everyday food and drink products and this shows that success is possible through reformulation.

“Yet, overall progress remains too slow. Faster and more robust action is needed to help us consume less sugar, which will help us become healthier and lower the economic burden of obesity and preventable pressure on the NHS.”

The sugar reduction programme is one of a range of government commitments to support children and families to reduce sugar intake. This includes advertising restrictions and ending promotional deals on unhealthy food high in salt, sugar and fat as well as calorie labelling at large restaurants, cafes and takeaways.

PHE will continue to provide expert advice to government on the potential levers to address excess sugar consumption. The government is committed to further action if progress is not made.

Government secures access for British business to £1.3 trillion of global procurement contracts

The Department for International Trade has today (Wednesday 7 October) announced that British businesses will be able to continue bidding for public sector contracts around the world worth over £1.3 trillion a year, following extensive engagement with WTO members.

At a meeting in Geneva, the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA) Committee confirmed the United Kingdom can join the GPA as an independent nation from 1 January 2021. Previously the UK participated through membership of the EU.

The agreement ensures UK businesses can compete fairly for overseas procurement contracts. This will benefit a range of British businesses from across the UK that work with international governments.

For example, UK advertising agencies can continue to export their services and remain competitive when bidding for tourism, branding and inward investment promotion work in other countries. Indeed, the GPA will continue to provide opportunities for businesses in diverse sectors to secure lucrative contracts from governments around the world. In turn, this will allow British businesses to expand their operations in the UK, supporting jobs and economic growth at home.

This will provide British businesses with the certainty they need to continue bidding for public sector contracts overseas covered by the GPA, on the same terms as they do now.

Overseas firms can also continue to bid for UK public sector contracts covered by the GPA, delivering better value for UK taxpayers, and today's agreement will continue to protect vital public services such as the NHS. It does not, and will not cover healthcare services but will enable continued access to vital resources like medical equipment, cleaning and building management services at competitive prices.

The GPA is an agreement between 20 Parties and 48 WTO Members, including major economies such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and Japan, which acts to open government procurement markets among its participants.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss said:

Today's announcement will provide British businesses with the certainty they need to continue bidding for £1.3 trillion worth of government procurement contracts overseas, which will ultimately help deliver the growth and jobs we need to recover from the economic challenges of coronavirus.

It is another significant step towards re-establishing Britain as a major force in global trade and a truly independent trading nation.

The UK's Permanent Representative to the WTO, Julian Braithwaite, said:

Today's decision is the result of two years of negotiations in the WTO. We fought hard to gain independent access to the GPA agreement, so that businesses of all sizes and from all corners of the UK can continue to benefit from this important deal.

Konrad Shek, Deputy Director, Policy & Regulation at The Advertising Association said:

We believe independent membership of the GPA is a crucial part of the UK's future trade policy. It is important for the UK to have continued fair and competitive access to the estimated annual USD1.7 trillion public procurement market that has been opened up under the GPA and have a voice in shaping the rules that underpin the system.

For our sector, these rules can affect the competitiveness of ad agencies that bid for branding, tourism, education and inward investment promotion work. For UK market and social research, which is the largest per capita research business in the world a third of the value of which is based upon export, it is essential that UK research businesses can continue to access market, opinion and social research government contracts and public procurement opportunities via the GPA.

UK statement to the WTO Committee on Government Procurement

I would like to thank all Parties here in the World Trade Organization's Committee on Government Procurement for the adoption, today, of the Decision on the Accession of the United Kingdom to the Government Procurement Agreement in its Own Right. This marks yet another significant step regarding the United Kingdom's accession to the Agreement.

As a signatory to the original Agreement in Marrakech, in 1994, the UK has long supported this deal. That is why I submitted the UK's formal accession

application in June 2018.

With coverage under the GPA being worth over £1.3 trillion, today's Decision means that businesses of all sizes, from across the UK, will continue to benefit from new opportunities in markets across the globe.

Importantly, the GPA ensures UK businesses can compete in covered foreign procurement markets on a level playing field with domestic businesses. The rules ensure transparency and fair treatment, as well as legal recourse, between the Parties.

The UK's commitment to this deal is demonstrated by the scale of its own market access offer, equating to coverage worth £68 billion. Indeed, Chair, when the UK joins as a Party in its own right, the coverage within our offer – based on our analysis of the 2018 data – will represent the second largest offer of any individual country that participates. So today's Decision represents a commitment by the UK to businesses in all GPA Parties and real, shared economic benefit.

Of course none of this would have been possible without strong cooperation from existing Parties. I want to pay tribute for their constructive approach throughout our accession, and for engaging with us in good faith. This has enriched our understanding of the Agreement, and prepared us well to make a full and positive contribution to the work of this Committee as the UK.

During the time it has taken to reach this point, we, and the Parties to the Agreement, have benefited from the wisdom of two Chairs and two Secretaries. I would like to extend the UK's sincere thanks to you, Chair. I would also like to express our appreciation to the GPA Secretariat staff – including Mr Reto Malacrida, Ms Anna Muller, and Mr Philippe Pelletier – for their consistent expertise throughout this process.

Today's Decision once again marks Parties' shared belief that the UK's continued participation within this deal is to the benefit of all. It paves the way for us deposit our Instrument of Accession 30 days before the end of the transition period between the United Kingdom and the European Union, to enable our independent membership to take effect on 1 January. When that happens, we will have delivered our longstanding joint objective of ensuring continuity for businesses in the UK and all Parties.

Moving ahead, as a full Party, we will continue warm cooperation with all in this room, and deliver on our commitment to update our schedules under Article XIX early in the new year.

We look forward to becoming a constructive participant across all issues in this Committee, including on accessions, as well as regular agenda items including sustainable procurement, small businesses, and information sharing initiatives.

Thank you, Chair.

UK Export Finance offers boost to Scottish businesses

As part of the UK Government's ambition to boost trade globally, UK Export Finance (UKEF) can now provide increased financial support that will benefit Scottish exporters seeking to win business in over 100 countries worldwide.

Recently, family-run manufacturer, BHC Ltd, based in Scotland, benefitted from UKEF support. UKEF provided £70m of support for Contracta Construction UK to build the Kumasi market in Ghana. To access UKEF's support, Contracta sourced goods and services from the UK supply chain, including BHC Ltd.

BHC Ltd. won a £20m export contract to provide 8000 tonnes of steelwork and 100,000m² of metal decking for the Kumasi Market after being introduced to Contracta at a UKEF-run Supplier Fair event, which has generated growth and opportunities for the business.

Brian Hewitt, Managing Director, BHC Ltd said:

UKEF helped us secure a huge international contract. Not only has this helped our business, but it has also bolstered the local economy during these difficult times.

We look forward to winning more overseas business off the back of this deal.

UK Government Minister for Scotland David Duguid said:

The UK Government is committed to supporting Scottish businesses to trade globally.

We encourage businesses to work with our world-leading credit agency, UKEF, and take advantage of export finance support to bolster their exports worldwide and strengthen their position on the global stage.

Through the Trade Hub in Edinburgh, businesses will be able to utilise UKEF, as well as the UK Government's global networks, expertise and influence.

Scottish produce is world famous and will benefit from new global trade opportunities once the EU transition period ends. UKEF has the potential to provide a real boost to exporters in Scotland, and every corner of the UK.

UKEF connected more than 500 UK suppliers with international projects through its supplier fair programme in 2019/20, and will continue to do so following the recent expansion of its capacity to provide export finance and support to more countries.

Countries that can benefit from UKEF's increased capacity to provide export finance include Egypt, Paraguay, Serbia, Uganda and Vietnam – allowing the UK government's export agency to support a diverse range of international projects that will increase UK trade and create opportunities for Scottish business.

This includes enabling UKEF to support more renewable projects overseas and providing opportunities for UK suppliers to be at the heart of the green industrial revolution, following the allocation of £2 billion of direct lending to finance green projects in the latest budget.

UKEF provides support to UK exports through guarantees, loans and insurance and is strategically positioned to provide competitive financing to overseas companies looking to do business with the UK. UKEF will continue to work with UK businesses to maximise the supply of UK goods and services into international projects, creating new trading opportunities for UK suppliers.

In 2019/20, UKEF provided £4.4 billion of support for UK exports, which included over £300 million in financing for wind farms in Taiwan, £110 million for a new maternity hospital in Ghana and £40 million to rehabilitate 83 kilometres of road in Gabon. As a result of its increased risk appetite, UKEF can now support a greater number of projects in a wide range of overseas markets.

Exports Minister Graham Stuart said:

As well as negotiating new free trade agreements and removing trade barriers, we are able to offer export finance support that can unlock the potential of the UK supply chain. UKEF helps overseas buyers access the financial support they need to procure from the UK. This helps UK companies win more business on the world stage.

UKEF's huge increase in capacity can be a real game-changer for the prospects of UK exporters, and will be vital to thousands of suppliers across the country.

[Ocean Turtle Diving: a Forces Friendly](#)

dive school

Ocean Turtle Diving are a premier dive school, one of only three PADI 5-star Career Development Centres in the whole of the UK. They have shown their commitment to the armed forces community through signing the Armed Forces Covenant and offer support and services in a number of important ways.

Each Covenant signatory is different, their pledges reflect the individual ways an organisation is able to support and uphold the principles of the Covenant. OTD have pledged to support the whole armed forces community and as a Forces-Friendly organisation they offer a forces discount on their courses and work with local CCF schools to arrange dive trips and training.

Ocean Turtle Diving are also a CTP Preferred Supplier, meaning they're instantly recognised by service leavers and CTP Career Consultants, as a supplier of quality approved training. CTP accreditation comes at no extra cost, but provides Ocean Turtle Diving with access to a pool of hard-working and motivated students, whose desire to learn and improve guarantees great results and provides an opportunity for OTD to raise their profile and reputation as a training provider that has achieved accreditation by the Ministry of Defence.

Importantly, for divers who may feel like there are barriers (physical or mental) to pursuing Scuba Diving as a recreation activity, Kerrie (Platinum Course Director, Elite Instructor & Owner) is an instructor trainer in adaptive techniques. This means that Kerrie and her team are able to offer bespoke training programmes that adapt to meet a divers individual training needs. This includes working with amputees and divers who suffer from Mental Health issues.

Kerrie Eade, OTD owner, Platinum Course Director, Elite Instructor:

We see the opportunity to work with veterans and service leavers as an absolute privilege. Over the years I've been lucky enough to see many learn to dive and go on to great things and become instructors themselves. Being underwater is a well-known healer, the benefits of being in nature and slow, deep breathing are well documented, and those with physical disabilities are able to be free and independent.

Taking the leap and rediscovering a passion!

Paul Ungi under the water. RFCA Crown Copyright.

Diving isn't a new passion for Paul, he has fond memories as a child of his dad (who also served) letting him lay in the bath with a cylinder and regulator so he could experience breathing under water. Once in the British

Army he took advantage of the training on offer and took up Sub Aqua.

Dad would take me with him to Lulworth Cove, Durdledor, Swanage and other locations to watch the club dive and we would often eat the crab and shellfish that the club would bring ashore, from that point that's what I wanted to do. The Army gave me that in abundance.

After leaving the military in 1998 Paul faced challenges with his mental health, today he firmly believes that being in the water and dive therapy has made a huge difference to his ability to stay positive and manage his mental wellbeing.

The water helps with my Mental Health Issues. I know that when I am in the water, whether under it, on top of it or by it, the water just eases the stress of life and makes me feel positive.

What's next for Paul?

For me to take that step to introduce myself to Ocean Turtle took a giant leap of faith and confidence, but without doing so I would not have been able to complete my Reactivate Course and regain my confidence.

Having now completed his course, Paul is saving up for a dry suit so that he can continue his UK diving, but admits the warmer climates do appeal.

First I've booked myself a wee trip to get some wreck diving experience in a warmer climate, and I have to say having done a lot of my Army diving in Northern Ireland, I do prefer the warmer clearer waters abroad. Lol.

Although I do still suffer with 'issues' it's been just the tonic so far to get me back where I want to be...under the sea in An Octopus' garden in the shade!!

Find out more about being a [Forces-Friendly organisation](#).