



Educating Young People on Debunking Food

Executive Summary

Food literacy is the ability to proficiently understand food, fostering a positive and healthy relationship with it. Education and food skills are needed to navigate complex food systems.

Early food trading focused on continual profit growth at the expense of health. UK and US obesity levels have tripled in 30 years. Alongside other preventable Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), this increase is straining healthcare systems and challenging their capacity to cope.

The malnutrition double burden refers to the countries' vulnerability to undernutrition coinciding with energy-dense, nutrient-poor, diets in others. Continually shifting generational preferences and urbanisation, amplified by population growth, demonstrates a sustainable food system focus.

Consumers' 'bliss point', the optimal satisfaction trigger level of brain reward systems, is exploited by marketing, neglecting nutritional considerations.

The cost-driven food system arguable exploits the finite foundation of the planet, with Earth's invaluable nature paramount to humankind. Food literacy education underpins efforts to improve personal health while advancing a sustainable food system. Food policy must now focus on 'food literacy' transitioning as we look to "debunk" food.

Policy Recommendations

- Introduce extended and staggered dining experience at secondary schools: by creating a calm environment, this will improve school food uptake and encourage positive eating habits. The School Food Plan provides numerous successful implementations for improving the lunch time experience.
- Healthy school food provision: Schools providing free snacks, including fruit, nuts and yoghurt, at afterschool sporting activities will improve attendance and create positive relationships between exercise and food; increasing physical activity will also act as a preventative measure against NCD.
- Introduce gardening education as part of the school curricula: Introducing gardening education will increase awareness of food origins. The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) provide invaluable resources including, activities, advice and training on school gardening. With the goal of implementing nationwide school gardens to improve wellbeing, developing the school curricula plays a crucial role.
- Develop an accessible Codex Alimentarius framework: The Codex Alimentarius is an extensive set of international food standards to protect consumer health and make food trade fair. An accessible Codex Alimentarius framework would facilitate the application of standards encompassing differing legal and administrative systems across the globe.

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Debunking Food to Transition Food Literacy

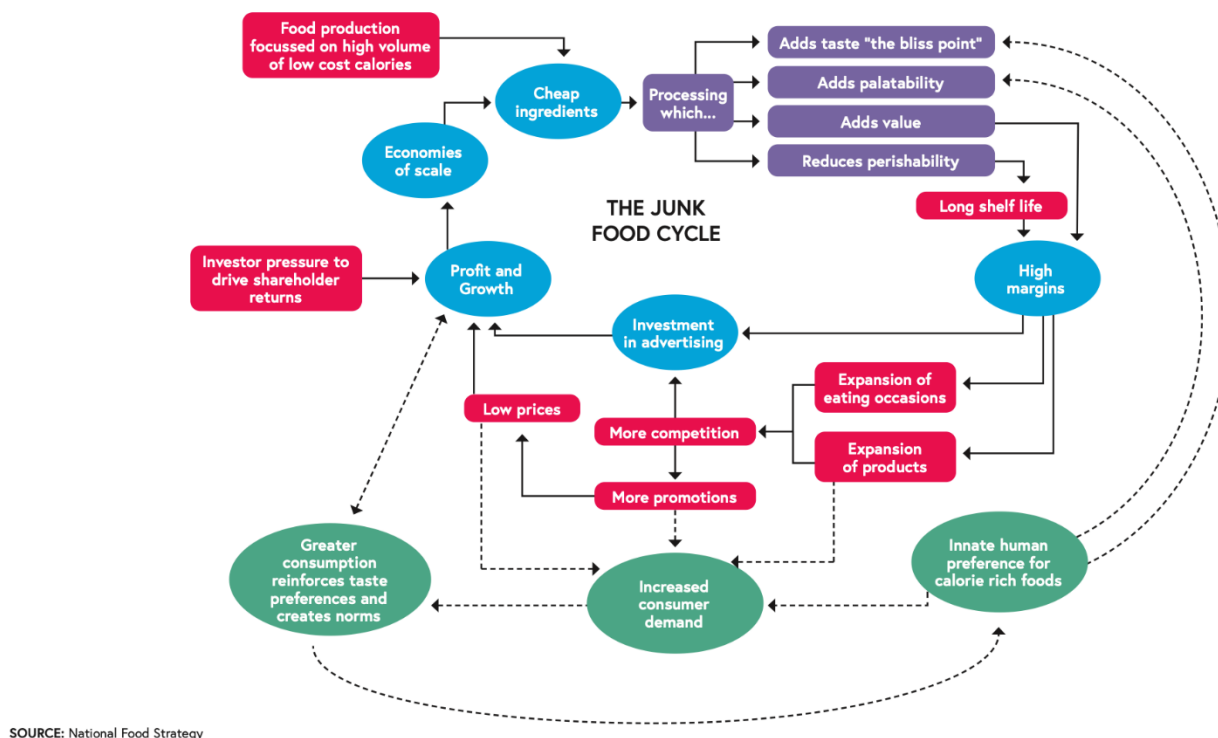


Figure 1 The Junk Food Cycle – The National Food Strategy July 2021

The Junk Food Cycle (Figure 1) highlights policy recommendations, creating an environment to Debunk Food education.

The reinforcing food cycle engrosses both companies and consumers. A focus on profit decreases nutritional quality but increases sensory optimisation by releasing dopamine which reaches 'bliss point' sense of reward.

Debunking Food is an educational initiative providing food literacy to 11 to 18 year olds, empowering future generations to break the Junk Food Cycle. This mirrors Climate Fresk, an organisation active in 167 countries that equips individuals with climate change knowledge. Using an interactive deck of interlinked cards, its success is demonstrated by the doubling of volunteers every five months.

Debunking Food is a deck of thematically grouped cards exploring interconnections within the food

system whilst fostering informed, positive relationships with food.

Groups of facilitator guided students discuss the connections between their cards before presenting their findings to the class and combining the deck.

For example:

Additives – Used to boost colour, flavour and shelf life, but what about our health? E.g E621 (MSG).

Our evolution – Our bodies and brain have evolved over 3 million years with preferences? Hunter gatherers → Farmers → Ultra-processed consumers.

Food policy must provide a setting where Debunking Food, where literate young people begin to practice positive relationships with food and apply holistic skills to create a healthy and sustainable food system that protects our Earth.

Project Benefit

The project supports SDGs by enhancing food security and improving nutrient accessibility, (SDG2), promoting food literacy for lifetime well-being (SDG3) and encouraging sustainable consumption to reduce environmental impact (SDG 12).

Further Reading

Higgin, S. (2025) [Food and Us: The incredible story of how food shapes humanity](#)

The National Food Strategy – [The Plan](#) – Henry Dimbleby

RHS – [School Gardening](#)

