

Senedd Cymru

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Bil Bwyd (Cymru)
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Ymateb gan: British Dietetic Association (BDA)

Welsh Parliament

Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee
Food (Wales) Bill

Evidence from: British Dietetic Association (BDA)

Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Chair of the BDA Wales Board
British Dietetic Association
3rd Floor, Interchange Place
151-165 Edmund Street
Birmingham B3 2TA

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Response to the Food (Wales) Bill from The British Dietetic Association

The British Dietetic Association (BDA), representing Dietitians in Wales, welcomes and fully supports the proposed Food (Wales) Bill. This letter is to further support our consultation responses in favour of the introduction of the Bill to secure a healthy, resilient, and sustainable food system and protect the health and wellbeing of our future generations in Wales.

Dietitians are Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) registered professionals who translate the science of nutrition into understandable and practical food information. They support individuals, communities and the population in Wales to have the skills, opportunity and confidence to access healthy, affordable and sustainable food.

We welcome the Bill which we feel is imperative if we are to meet the scale of the economic, health and social challenges ahead. We believe food is a basic human need. It is essential for healthy growth and development of children and young people and important in enhancing wellbeing and quality of life.

This Bill will support a more joined-up approach to food and provide a much needed, integrated framework upon which to develop a safe and sustainable food system in Wales. To have a long-term impact on inequalities and to improve health outcomes in Wales, requires multi-sector involvement. We need clear goals related to food, to be achieved collectively. .

We agree that a radical, long-term approach is needed to overhaul the Welsh and UK food system with a focus towards sustainable, home grown, produced and distributed food. The Bill should encompass the key aim to balance the population's food supply to reduce food industry production and supply of high fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) foods. The impact of Wales's obesogenic environment is currently compounded by a complex and largely unregulated food system, targeted advertising and easy access to HFSS foods. These can

only be addressed through a cohesive and supported food environment, coupled with easy access to the right, evidence-based advice..

Action is paramount to reduce the burden that diet-related ill health has on people's lives, economic stability and life expectancy. Through these actions we can reduce the impact of illness on the NHS and health and social care services.

Wales faces a health crisis compounded by the current financial environment. Almost 60% of adults and 27% of children in Wales are overweight or obese. Wales has the highest proportion of overweight and obese 4–5-year-olds in Great Britain. Obesity is the leading cause of major health conditions including Type 2 diabetes, stroke, cardiovascular disease and a number of cancers.

Figures produced by the Audit Office suggest that it may be our youngest members of society who face the biggest impact on their long-term health and wellbeing. The Auditor General released a report (November 2022) which calls for a review of Welsh Government policy to tackle the cost-of-living crisis and that 34% of children in Wales are living in severe poverty in Wales. This is further compounded by food prices rising steeply by 15% over the last year. The Food Bill is a key measure to address and support Wales' recovery from food poverty and support the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

This perfect storm of rising rates of obesity and related comorbidities, compounded by potential food poverty for many of our population will result in increased poor health, morbidity and mortality with a huge increase in burden on our already overstretched health service.

Dietitians work throughout Wales to support communities in eating well through the [Nutrition Skills for Life programme](#)

Our objectives are to

- Build capacity in the community workforce in Wales to inform and support communities to access a varied and balanced diet
- Deliver accredited nutrition training to promote consistent nutrition messages and contribute towards the prevention of nutrition related disease
- Support the development of healthier environments and improved access to nutritious foods through training and advice
- Support local action and development of community food initiatives through co-production and ensure they are evidenced based
- Support local partnerships to raise the profile of nutrition and help to achieve better outcomes in relation to nutrition and health for their population
- Focus on working with communities that experience disadvantage and may benefit the most.

The Food (Wales) Bill offers a unique opportunity to make the long-term changes needed to transform our food system in Wales towards a healthier more sustainable food system. This needs to rise above the will of political parties to be embedded within Welsh legislation. It will demonstrate the Welsh Government's commitment to transformational change;

shorten and strengthen the food supply chain in Wales; assure the quality and sustainability of our food; and, help communities make sound and reliable food choices.

We believe that without the implementation of the Food (Wales) Bill, Wales faces an uncertain future for food security, socioeconomic stability and ultimately the quality of life, health and wellbeing of our nation.

We are keen to assist where possible to make this happen. Please let me know what support would be useful from the members of the BDA and our all-Wales dietetic networks. I look forward to hearing from you.

On behalf of the Wales Board, BDA