

Unit 3.2.7

The Political Influences on Food Systems

Key Knowledge and Key Skills

Key Knowledge 3.1.7

The political influences on the food systems including the manufacturing industry, the advertising industry and consumer activism, and how these impact on food choices and food sovereignty.

Key Skills 3.2.6

Analyse political influences on the food systems and discuss the potential impacts on food choices including food sovereignty.

Key Skills 3.2.8

Apply practical activities to evaluate factors that influence food selections and demonstrate understandings about repertoires that reflect the healthy eating recommendations of the Australian Dietary Guidelines and the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating.

Key Terms and Definitions

Codes or **codes of practice** are set guidelines that ensure businesses and consumers have access to information about products and services to make informed choices.

Consumer activism is a process whereby people shape other people's attitudes, behaviour, beliefs and values.

Food sovereignty occurs when people have access to a food system that provides culturally appropriate and nutritious food, where ethics and the environment have been considered at each stage of the food system and where individuals and farmers have greater control over what they choose to eat (refer to page 10 of the VCE Food Studies Study Design, 2023–2027 for further information).

Policies are recommendations or guidelines that encourage actions and behaviours.

Regulations are laws or government-endorsed rules by which people are expected to abide.

Self-regulation is generally characterised by industry-formulated rules and codes of conduct, with industry solely responsible for enforcement, (Australian Law Reform Commission, 2012).

Australia's Political System

In Australia, we have three levels of government to form our political system: federal, state, and local. The Australian Government works with industry and other government organisations towards ensuring that the food sold in Australia and exported to other countries is high quality and safe to eat. They also aim to make certain information Australians receive about food is truthful and not misleading. Policies are developed and regulations are enforced in Australia about what can and cannot be produced by the food industry and how it can be marketed.

The Development of Policies and Regulations

Policies

Ministers are members of the Australian Government who have been given an area of responsibility for how Australia is run. These Ministers are responsible for developing policies, which include guidelines or recommendations. These policies are not mandatory. When developing policies, Ministers recognise a need or problem within their population and make recommendations or create guidelines that encourage actions and behaviours to address this need or problem. The Food Ministers set policies that govern the food industry in Australia.

Regulations

Food Standards Australia New Zealand sets food regulations. These regulations are often shaped by policy development and take the form of laws or government-endorsed rules by which people are expected to abide. The state and territory governments are responsible for enforcing these regulations. These regulations are mandatory.

The policies and regulations developed, implemented, and enforced by the government substantially influence the food choices available to people. The policies and regulations also influence the type of food system used to produce food and its accessibility.

Food Sovereignty in our Food System

Many people are now seeking a food system that allows them to make informed choices about what they consume. They want to choose what they eat, where their food comes from, and how it is grown. This concept is referred to as food sovereignty. A food system that focuses on food sovereignty ensures that the health of all people and the environment is considered a priority in each stage of the food system, from the farm to the consumer and even the disposal of food. A food system that promotes food sovereignty gives farmers greater control of the decisions that impact their ability to produce ethical and sustainable food.

There is concern that our current food system lacks food sovereignty and does not allow people to make informed decisions about the food they eat. Individuals and consumer activist groups are questioning the amount of control the manufacturing and advertising industries have over how goods or services are produced or delivered. They feel that the manufacturing and advertising industries have too much control over what people consume and how it can be marketed, resulting in a food system that lacks food sovereignty. Several consumer activist groups in Australia are working towards ensuring that Australian policies and regulations contribute to a food system that focuses on food sovereignty and enables people to make healthy food choices.

Watch this video that defines food sovereignty: <https://youtu.be/Oz0dutlXmfc>

Watch this video about food sovereignty and food security: <https://youtu.be/KgoiGhbUsrg>

The Manufacturing Industry: Food Choices and Food Sovereignty

Australia's food manufacturing industry is incredibly diverse and produces a wide range of beverages and food products. They comprise abattoirs, bakeries, dairies, and factories where food is processed. Processing raw food items into consumable food products, packaging, and distributing food are all parts of the food manufacturing industry.

The manufacturing industry has had a significant influence on two government-led initiatives:

- Healthy Food Partnership; and
- Health Star Rating Scheme.

The Healthy Food Partnership

Reducing the Amount of Salt, Saturated Fats, and Sugar in Packaged Foods

The Australian Government's Department of Health established the Healthy Food Partnership (HFP), a collaborative program between the public health sector and the food industry. The main aim of the HFP is to encourage food manufacturers to reduce the amount of salt, saturated fats, and sugar in the packaged foods they make. The HFP believes that supporting companies that make positive changes will help reduce the incidence of diet-related diseases, overweight, and obesity in Australia.

In May 2020, the HFP released its first set of non-mandatory goals for beverage and food companies. Thirty-one individuals, organisations, and public health groups were consulted during the development of the targets—26 of these submitted responses during the development phase.

It could be argued that, in some cases, these nutrition targets are not strict enough. Currently, many flavoured milks on the market already meet these targets, with some using sugar substitutes to enhance the sweetness of the milk. Similarly, a popular meat pie product currently sold at major supermarkets is only slightly over the limit of sodium and saturated fat. A more significant difference between current food products and the nutrition targets seems to be with breakfast cereals. Many of these products currently far exceed the targets for June 2026. Breakfast cereal manufacturers will need to make significant changes to their products to meet these targets.

The table below lists the June 2026 targets set by the HFP for breakfast cereal without fruit, flavoured milk and one type of pastry.

Food category	Sub-category	Nutrition target	Target timeframe
Breakfast cereals – no fruit	Breakfast cereals without fruit	20 g/100 g At least a 20% reduction for products containing over 25 g sugar/100 g	June 2026
	Plain puffed or flaked or extruded breakfast cereals – without other ingredients such as fruit, nuts, and coconut	Sodium 450 mg/100 g	June 2026
Flavoured milk	Flavoured milk: from a mammal	Sugar 9 g/100 ml	June 2025
	Flavoured milk: Dairy alternative Any milk substitute with added flavour(s)	Sugar 5 g/100 ml	June 2025
Meat, poultry and/or vegetable filling encased in pastry	Wet pastries	Sodium 400 mg/100 g	June 2024
	Wet meat, vegetable, or dairy filling encased in pastry.	Saturated fat 7 g/100 g	June 2024

Modified from: <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/07/partnership-reformulation-program-summary-of-food-categories-and-reformulation-targets-food-reformulation-program-summary-of-food-categories-and-reformulation-targets.pdf>

The Impact of Food Choices

The HFP policy was developed to encourage all manufacturers to reduce the amount of salt, saturated fats, and sugar in their food products. This policy was developed to increase the variety of packaged foods available for consumers to choose from that are low in salt, saturated fat, and sugar. However, there is some concern that this policy will make it even harder for consumers to make healthier food choices because:

- The targets are not mandatory;
- Food manufacturers may use artificial ingredients as substitutes for salt, saturated fat, and sugar in their food products. While a product may not be high in salt, saturated fat, or sugar, it may be high in other additives.
- The level of other nutrients, such as iodine, may be decreased along with the level of sodium.
- Food products with lower amounts of salt, saturated fat, and sugar may lose their sensory appeal.

Many of the issues raised, including the impact on iodine intakes and the use of artificial ingredients, were considered part of the Development of the Healthy Food Partnership.

The Impact on Food Sovereignty

The HFP seems to have promoted food sovereignty because they had input from individuals, food manufacturers, organisations, and public health sectors. However, some may say that involving the manufacturing industry resulted in a conflict of interest. Some manufacturers were opposed to the targets because of the increased costs involved in modifying food products to meet the targets and felt that changing the nutritional content of foods may result in consumers no longer buying their products.

The Health Star Rating System

The Health Star Rating system was developed by the Australian and state governments through consultation with consumer groups, the manufacturing industry, and public health groups.

The main reason for implementing the Health Star Rating system was to enable consumers to make healthy food choices. In this system, food's overall nutritional profiles are rated from $\frac{1}{2}$ a star to 5 stars. The general idea of the system is that the higher the rating that appears on the food label, the healthier the food.

The system is designed as a comparison tool between multi-ingredient packaged foods. For example, a comparison could be made between a 1.5-star and a 2.5-star frozen pizza. Both pizzas would not be considered nutritious, but the ratings allow the consumer to choose the healthiest option.

Food manufacturers can use two types of Health Star Rating Systems on food packages as pictured below.



Source: <http://www.healthstarrating.gov.au/internet/healthstarrating/publishing.nsf/Content/How-to-use-health-stars>

[Click here](#) to learn more about Australia's Health Star Rating system.

The Health Star Rating: Food Choice

The Health Star Rating system may seem an effective solution to providing consumers with information about the nutritional value of the food they buy and enabling them to make healthy food choices. However, there are problems with the scheme, which may result in consumers not always making the healthiest food choice available:

- The rating only calculates the dietary value of a food based on seven nutrients. When calculating the overall rating, packaged foods lose points if they contain energy, saturated fat, sugar, and salt. They gain points for their fruit, vegetable, fibre, and protein content. This may mean that a product containing a

significant amount of saturated fat and sugar may receive a high rating if it also contains high amounts of vegetables, protein, and fibre.

- Consumers might not purchase unpackaged foods that are nutritious, such as fresh fruits, because they do not have a rating. To overcome this issue, a review has recommended 10 changes to improve the system. One of these changes included the automatic 5-star rating for marginally processed fruit and vegetables. The aim of these changes is to permit unpackaged fruit and vegetables to use the system without the need for unnecessary packaging.
- Manufacturers can choose to include the rating on packages of food and beverages; it is not mandated. Consumers may select products with Health Star Ratings, believing they are the healthiest option. However, some products without the Health Star Rating could be just as or more nutritious than those with a Health Star Rating.
- People must be educated to understand the Health Star Rating system and that only similar products can be compared. There is a possibility that people who do not understand the system may compare flavoured milk with natural yoghurt and choose to consume the flavoured milk because it has a higher rating, failing to realise that yoghurt is likely the best choice overall.

Watch this video to learn how Health Star Rating system impacts food choices: <https://youtu.be/3xNSeFo72g8>

Watch this video to learn how the Health Star Rating works: https://youtu.be/M70w_xUP34U

The Health Star Rating: Food Sovereignty

To successfully achieve food sovereignty, people must have access to nutritious foods and the information they need to make educated and informed decisions about the food they choose. The Health Star Rating could be confusing for many Australians who lack the education to understand its concept. This may result in people consuming food they think is healthy when it is not.

A food system that promotes food sovereignty is fair for all. There is concern that the food manufacturing industry had too much influence in developing the Health Star Rating system. The manufacturing industry wanted the Health Star Rating to remain voluntary rather than mandatory on all beverage and food products. They felt that if it was a mandatory requirement, some of their products might receive a low Health Star Rating, and they may experience a decline in sales and profits. Some people feel that this reflects a system that is not focused on ensuring consumers have access to healthy food choices but one controlled by manufacturers to profit from producing unhealthy foods. On a positive note, while the HSR system is currently voluntary, uptake targets have been set by the Food Ministers' Meeting. If these targets are not met, Food Ministers will consider mandating the system.

Public health and consumer groups, such as Nutrition Australia, advocated that the Health Star Rating should be mandatory on all packaged food and beverages, including fresh foods. They also believed it should be used to assess the nutritional value of all beverage and food products rather than rating food in separate categories. Mandatory inclusion of the Health Star Rating may have contributed to food sovereignty by ensuring people could make informed decisions about their food choices.

The Advertising and Marketing Industry: Food Choices and Food Sovereignty

Advertising and Marketing to Children

There is a concern that food advertising has contributed to this rate of overweight and obesity in young people in Australia. Many believe that food advertising influences children to choose unhealthy food options, eat vast quantities of unhealthy foods, and makes it difficult for them to select healthy food choices. For this reason, consumer activists and groups are partitioning for more comprehensive legislation restricting food advertising to children.

Reports indicate that children are subjected to significant amounts of food advertising through free-to-air television, local sporting programs, billboards, social influencers, advergames, and product placement on social media. An international study in 2019 revealed that, on average, 80% of food and beverage television advertisements were for

unhealthy products. Of all the countries studied, Australia's data was the worst, with only about one in six food advertisements for healthy food – the remaining five were for unhealthy foods. Another study in New South Wales looked at advertisements on 53 different transport routes. One-third of the advertisements on the routes studied were for food and drinks, with many promoting discretionary food items.

Regulation and policy development in this area has undergone significant changes recently.

- The Australian Food and Grocery Council (AFGC) is no longer involved in the marketing and advertising industry self-regulation system.
- The Children's Television Standards, developed in 2009, which limited the advertising of unhealthy foods to children during specific times on free-to-air television is now outdated. These standards are no longer in force and were replaced by the Broadcasting Services (Australian Content and Children's Television) Standards in 2020.
- The Responsible Children's Marketing Initiative (covering food sold at retail outlets such as supermarkets) and the Quick Service Restaurant Initiative for Responsible Advertising and Marketing to Children (covering food sold at fast-food restaurants) developed in 2018, and previously administered by AFGC, have been superseded.

In the past, of particular concern was that unhealthy food advertising occurred during high-rating children and family television shows. Also, the codes and regulations did not address all forms of advertising and promotion and did not apply to all food advertisements, and the definition of 'nutritious food' was unclear.

Many believed the food advertising regulations and codes were insufficient and did not support children and parents in choosing healthy eating options. More regulation was needed; the World Health Organization recommended that the Australian Government limit young people's exposure to food advertising.

The Food and Beverages Advertising Code

In 2021, the Australian Association of National Advertiser's (AANA's) released a new code. This is called the Food and Beverages Advertising Code. It aims to protect the rights of consumers by ensuring that the advertising and marketing of food and beverage products in Australia reflects health and safety standards in an honest, legal, and truthful way. The code is self-regulated by those in industry.

The Food and Beverages Advertising Code released by the AANA aims to address these issues.

One of the main objectives of the new Code is to reduce the opportunity for children to view advertisements promoting occasional food or drinks (treats).

The following aspects are new parts of the code:

- *Aligns truth in advertising requirements with the Australian Consumer Law (ACL)*
- *Harmonises and raises the definition of "child" to 15 years to align with the Children's Television Standards*
- *Food and non-alcoholic beverage companies will only be able to show advertisements for occasional foods when the proportion of children is 25% or less of the total audience. The threshold is currently 35% or less.*
- *The definition of 'occasional' foods will be determined by the application of the independent, statutory food authority Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) Nutrient Profiling Scoring Criterion. If the food or beverage does not meet the nutrient profile test, it is deemed occasional and advertising cannot target children.*
- *The Code will now apply to sponsorships. Sponsorship ads that target children must not show occasional food or beverage product, but can show master branding such as brand name and logo. These restrictions do not apply to sponsorship advertisements for food and beverage products that meet the FSANZ criteria.*
- *Promotional offer of interest to children must not create a sense of urgency or encourage purchase of an excessive quantity for irresponsible consumption. This includes collection-based promotions.*
- *Must not give children occasional food or beverage products as awards, prizes or vouchers. This includes \$ amount vouchers.*

(National Retail Association, 2021)

The AANA believe that the new code demonstrates the commitment of the advertising industry in developing adaptable and responsible codes of practice. However, it is essential to note that the codes are still self-regulated.

Watch this video clip that highlights types of food advertisements aimed at children: <https://youtu.be/-PSDX9gVnnY> or https://youtu.be/hGN1ZEABk_Y

Watch this video clip about using social media and the web to advertise food: https://youtu.be/S0MK_OUbKHw

National Obesity Strategy

In March 2022, the Australian Government released the National Obesity Strategy – a 10-year framework aimed at preventing and treating obesity. This strategy seeks to reduce the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to children. They hope to achieve this by developing policies that will decrease the amount of:

- advertisements for food and beverages across all audiovisual media;
- branding and sponsorship by companies advertising unhealthy food and beverages in places visited by large amounts of people, in particular children; and
- promotions that use characters, games, and toys that appeal to children to promote unhealthy food options.

Food Advertising to Children: Food Choice and Food Sovereignty

Food sovereignty promotes a food system where people can make informed decisions about the type of food they choose to eat. Advertisements that promote unhealthy food options can be misleading. When unhealthy food is advertised, people are more likely to accept and like the advertised food. They begin to think it is normal to eat the food because they see it consistently promoted, often by athletes, celebrities, and models.

Food advertisements aimed at children can have even more impact because children lack the cognitive ability to understand that commercials are designed to sell products and that the information they present is not always accurate.

Food advertising can influence parental food choices too. Research by the Victorian Cancer Council found that there is a chance that parents of children who play community sports, sponsored by fast-food companies, could associate the advertised foods with a healthy and active image. This may result in many parents believing that consistently serving discretionary foods high in fat, salt, and sugar to their children can be part of a healthy lifestyle. This type of food advertising may also encourage parents to think that corporate food and beverage companies care about local communities.

Consumer Activism: Food Choices and Food Sovereignty

More people are beginning to seek a food system that embraces food sovereignty. They are questioning the behaviour of companies and the ethics and fairness of government policies and regulations that impact the quality of their food supply. Some are turning to consumer activism to achieve food sovereignty. They want to influence food manufacturing companies and change government policies and regulations so that more ethical, environmental, and nutritious food choices are available for consumers to buy.

Consumer activism has been responsible for many changes to the food produced and sold in our food system. For example, over the last decade, we have seen an increased number of organisations concerned about the welfare of animals in our food system. Consequently, the number of caged eggs sold in supermarkets has reduced and the number of free-range animal products such as chicken, eggs, ham, and pork has increased.

The Obesity Policy Coalition

The Obesity Policy Coalition was established in 2006 by the Cancer Council of Victoria, Diabetes Victoria, VicHealth, and The Global Obesity Centre at Deakin University.

In 2021, the Obesity Policy Coalition released a report titled, 'Brands off our Kids.' This report highlighted the methods the food manufacturing industry employs to market unhealthy foods to children and urges the government to set more ethical and stringent standards on food advertising, particularly targeting children. They also stressed that the government must take control of policy development and regulations concerning food advertising, and that the food processing industry must no longer be able to develop its own standards and codes. The four critical

components of the 'Brands off our Kids' strategy that the Coalition believe will protect Australian children from unhealthy food advertisements are identified in the image below.

Brands off our kids!

Four actions for a childhood free from unhealthy food marketing

1 Ensure TV, radio and cinemas are free from unhealthy food marketing from 6am to 9.30pm

2 Prevent processed food companies from targeting children

3 Ensure public spaces and events are free from unhealthy food marketing

4 Protect children from digital marketing of unhealthy food

opc.org.au/brands-off-our-kids
#brandsoffourkids

Source: <https://www.opc.org.au/brands-off-our-kids>

Watch these videos where community individuals advocate their support for the 'Brands off our Kids' report by the Obesity Policy Coalition: <https://youtu.be/de7OmabJ1qk> and <https://youtu.be/EOCVxXdbzVk>

Tax on Sugar-Sweetened Beverages

Consumer activists have also been campaigning to improve the nutritional value of our food supply, in particular, the sugar content of our sugar-sweetened beverages.

The high content and intake of sugar-sweetened beverages is a concern because high sugar consumption is associated with cancer, tooth decay, and weight gain. In addition, it can cause an accumulation of fat around the waist, increasing a person's risk of cardiovascular disease and type two diabetes. People's consumption of soft drinks is a significant concern because people can quickly consume the 9–12 teaspoons of sugar in a 375 ml can of soft drink.

Sugar-Sweetened Beverages and Consumer Activism

Over 50 countries have developed policies and regulations enforcing a sugar tax on sugar-sweetened beverages to reduce sugar consumption. Reputable studies from Mexico, South Africa, and the United Kingdom have shown that introducing a higher tax on sugar-sweetened beverages helped to reduce the amount consumed. A growing number of people in Australia believe our sugar consumption could be significantly reduced if the government introduced policies and regulations endorsing a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages.

Currently, a 10% tax (GST) is applied to all processed beverages and foods sold in Australia. Fresh fruits and vegetables are exempt. Various individuals, groups, and organisations in Australia are campaigning to introduce a higher tax on sugar-sweetened beverages to raise the retail price of the average sugary drink by 20%. They hope to deter people from consuming soft drinks. Some of the organisations supporting a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages include the Australian Dental Association, Australian Medical Association, Cancer Council Australia, Diabetes Australia, Heart Foundation, Obesity Policy Coalition; and Parents' Voice.

Many of these organisations, including Nutrition Australia, helped establish the Rethink Sugary Drinks partnership. The Rethink Sugary Drinks has been campaigning since mid-2010 for the following actions:

- Increase tax on sugary drinks, which would increase the retail price by 20%.
- Implement Australian Government social media campaigns to explain how sugar-sweetened beverages impact health.

- Introduce mandatory restrictions on the sale of sugar-sweetened beverages in all schools, government institutions, children's sports and events, and other places children consistently visit.
- Develop policies to reduce sugar-sweetened beverage availability in government institutions, health care settings, public places, and work environments.
- Increase availability and promotion of tap water containing fluoride.

Watch these videos developed as part of the Rethink Sugary Drinks campaign: <https://youtu.be/ZTXXIPJVMqQ> and <https://youtu.be/D8SWHwTA1fo>

In January 2022, the Australian Medical Association released a social media campaign called **#SicklySweet**. Television, newspapers, and radio all reported on the campaign, which urged Australians to choose water instead of sugary drinks. As part of the campaign, people were encouraged to share information about the negative impacts of consuming sugar-sweetened beverages online through their social media accounts.

[Click here](#) to access the website about the **#SicklySweet** campaign.

Milk Wars

Consumer activists have also been campaigning to give farmers greater control of the decisions that affect their ability to produce food ethically and sustainably.

In 2016, two large dairy processors, Murray Goulburn and Fonterra, decreased the amount of money they were willing to pay farmers for their milk. This price reduction was in response to reduced demand for Australian milk overseas and an increasing supply of milk available in Australia. As a result, major supermarkets, Coles and Woolworths, also reduced the price of milk in their stores to \$1 per litre.

At the time, many Australians blamed Coles and Woolworths for lowering how much they would pay farmers for milk. But the supermarkets were not entirely at fault; the price of milk was also lower because of changes to the global market. Still, the public urged supermarkets to take some responsibility and share some of the profits they received from milk sales with struggling farmers.

Many consumer activists began pressuring Coles and Woolworths to increase the price of their milk to support Australian dairy farmers. Many individuals started online petitions, and dairy organisations such as the NSW Farmers Association campaigned for change. Farmer Power, a consumer activist group formed to protect farmers' interests, also held various rallies to support farmers during the 'Milk Wars.'

By March 2019, all major supermarkets in Australia had increased the price of 2 l and 3 l milk by 10c/l, with processors passing on the additional funds to Australian dairy farmers.

Watch this video about a farmer urging Australians to boycott Coles until they increased the cost of their milk: <https://youtu.be/kHVmKeM0KP4>

Milk Wars: Food Sovereignty and Food Choice

Food systems that promote food sovereignty focus on the farmer receiving a fair wage for the products he produces. Sovereignty guarantees a reasonable price for farmers selling their produce to the domestic market. Reportedly, during the 'Milk Wars,' it cost more for farmers to produce milk than they were receiving payment for. Fortunately, some profits from milk sales are now being passed on to Australian dairy farmers.

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Written Activity One

Eat Drink Politics

Activity 1

As a class, answer the following questions:

The Political Influence on Food Systems

1. What is the difference between a policy and a regulation?
2. What does food sovereignty seek to do?
3. What are individuals and consumer activists beginning to question?

Activity 2

In small groups, select one of the topics below.

Answer the questions and report your findings back to the class.

The Healthy Food Partnership

1. What is the main aim of the Healthy Food Partnership (HFP)?
2. Who was involved in the establishment of the HFP?
3. What are some of the HFP targets?
4. Why are some food manufacturers opposed to the targets? Do you think this is justified?
5. How does the HFP targets help or hinder people in making food choices?
6. How does the HFP promote and/or hinder food sovereignty?

The Health Star Rating

1. What is the main aim of the Healthy Food Star Rating system (HSR)?
2. Who was involved in the development of the HSR?
3. How does the HSR work?
4. How does the HSR help or hinder people's food choices?
5. How does the HSR promote and/or hinder food sovereignty?

The Food and Beverages Advertising Code

1. Who released the Food and Beverages Advertising Code?
2. What is the aim of this code?
3. What does the term self-regulated mean? Who is the code self-regulated by?
6. What are some of the recommendations as part of the code?
7. How does the Food and Beverages Code help or hinder people's food choices?
4. How does the HSR promote and/or hinder food sovereignty?

National Obesity Strategy

1. Who released the National Obesity Strategy?
2. What is the National Obesity Strategy?
3. What are the aims of the National Obesity Strategy?
4. How does food advertising help or hinder people's food choices?
5. How does food advertising help or hinder food sovereignty?

The Obesity Coalition

1. Who established The Obesity Coalition?
2. Look up the term consumer activism on the internet. What does this term mean?
3. Why is the Obesity Coalition considered consumer activism?
4. What was the Obesity Coalition campaigning for?
5. What are the four critical components of the 'Brands off Our Kids" report?

Tax on Sugar-Sweetened Beverages

1. Why are consumer activists campaigning for a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages?
2. What has happened in other countries that have introduced a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages?
3. What groups are involved in consumer activism regarding a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages?

Written Activity Two

The Politics of Food

Watch the video at this link: <https://youtu.be/U4Pw1m7EuAQ>

Answer the following questions:

1. How many people were overweight or obese in the 1980s compared to nowadays?
2. Why have so many people become overweight or obese?
3. What does the speaker mean when he says, 'an obesogenic environment.?
4. Where is our food produced nowadays?
5. Why do we source our ingredients or food from these places?
6. What kind of foods do we source from these places and how are they produced?
7. Why do we desire, seek or want these foods?
8. How are these foods marketed to us? Provide some examples.
9. What is the problem with marketing these foods to Australians, in particular children?
10. How much money is spent marketing food products every year? Why is this a problem?
11. How much money is spent marketing food products every year? Why do food companies spend so much money on marketing? Why is this a problem?
12. Is it right for fast food companies to sponsor sports or giveaway toys with their meals? Why? Why not?
13. Why has the advertising and marketing of food become a political issue?
14. The speaker recommends changing the food system to reduce the incidence of overweight and obesity.

What does the speaker mean when he says, "If we don't regulate the food industry, the food industry will regulate us"?

15. What do you think the government can do about marketing and advertising processed food products with high amounts of fat, salt, and sugar?
16. What can we do as food consumers about the amount of processed foods available in our food system?
17. How will the changes or interventions you suggested impact food choices and food sovereignty?
18. What kind of food movements or activism could we be part of to help change our food system?

Practical Activity One

Breakfast Cereal Reviews

Activity 1

Read the article at this link: <https://www.choice.com.au/food-and-drink/bread-cereal-and-grains/cereal-and-muesli/articles/breakfast-cereal-review>

Answer the following questions:

1. List the reasons why breakfast is an important meal of the day.

2. The article states that “many cereals targeted specifically at kids have more in common with treat foods than a nutritious breakfast.”

Explain how the Healthy Food Partnership has tried to rectify this issue.

3. The article recommends comparing Health Star Ratings to choose the right breakfast cereal.

How do the Health Star Ratings work?

What are the benefits of using the Health Star Ratings to select nutritious foods?

What are the challenges in using the Health Star Ratings to select nutritious foods?

4. Briefly list how a consumer can determine the nutritional value of breakfast cereal.

Activity 2**Sensory Analysis**

Conduct a sensory analysis to establish the sweetness level of each breakfast cereal.

You might like to use a focus group from a younger year level to rate the level of sweetness.

Breakfast Cereal without Fruit	Colour in the teaspoons to rate the level of sweetness				
1. Coco pops	    				
2. Coles, I'M Free From Special Flakes	    				
3. Cornflakes	    				
4. Fruit Loops	    				
5. Rice Bubbles	    				
6. Nutrigrain Original	    				
7. Milo with Protein	    				
8. Weetbix	    				

Dietary Analysis

Record the manufacturer serving size and amount of fibre, saturated fat, sodium, and sugar per 100g in the table below.

Breakfast Cereal without Fruit	Dietary Fibre per 100g	Saturated Fat per 100g	Sodium per 100g	Sugar per 100g	Serving Size per 100g
1. Coco pops					
2. I'm Free From Special Flakes					
3. Cornflakes					
4. Fruit Loops					
5. Rice Bubbles					
6. Nutrigrain Original					
7. Milo with Protein					
8. Weetbix					

Discussion of Results

The Australian Government's Department of Health established the *Healthy Food Partnership* (HFP), a collaborative program between the public health sector and the food industry. The main aim of the HFP is to encourage food manufacturers to reduce the amount of salt, saturated fats, and sugar in the packaged foods they make. The June 2026 targets set by the HFP for breakfast cereal without fruit is 20 g/100 g.

1. Which breakfast cereals meet this target? Which ones contain less than 20g sugar per 100g?

Did any of these breakfast cereals rate high in terms of sweetness?

What ingredients might manufacturers add to breakfast cereals to increase their sweetness? Is this a problem? Why? Why not?

2. Which breakfast cereals did not meet this target? Which ones contain more than 20g of sugar per 100g?

3. Did any of these breakfast cereals rate high in terms of sweetness?

4. How might manufacturers decrease the sugar in these breakfast cereals without compromising the level of sweetness?

5. How have the breakfast cereals rated high in sugar been marketed? What advertising techniques have been used? Do you think this is ethical? Why? Why not?

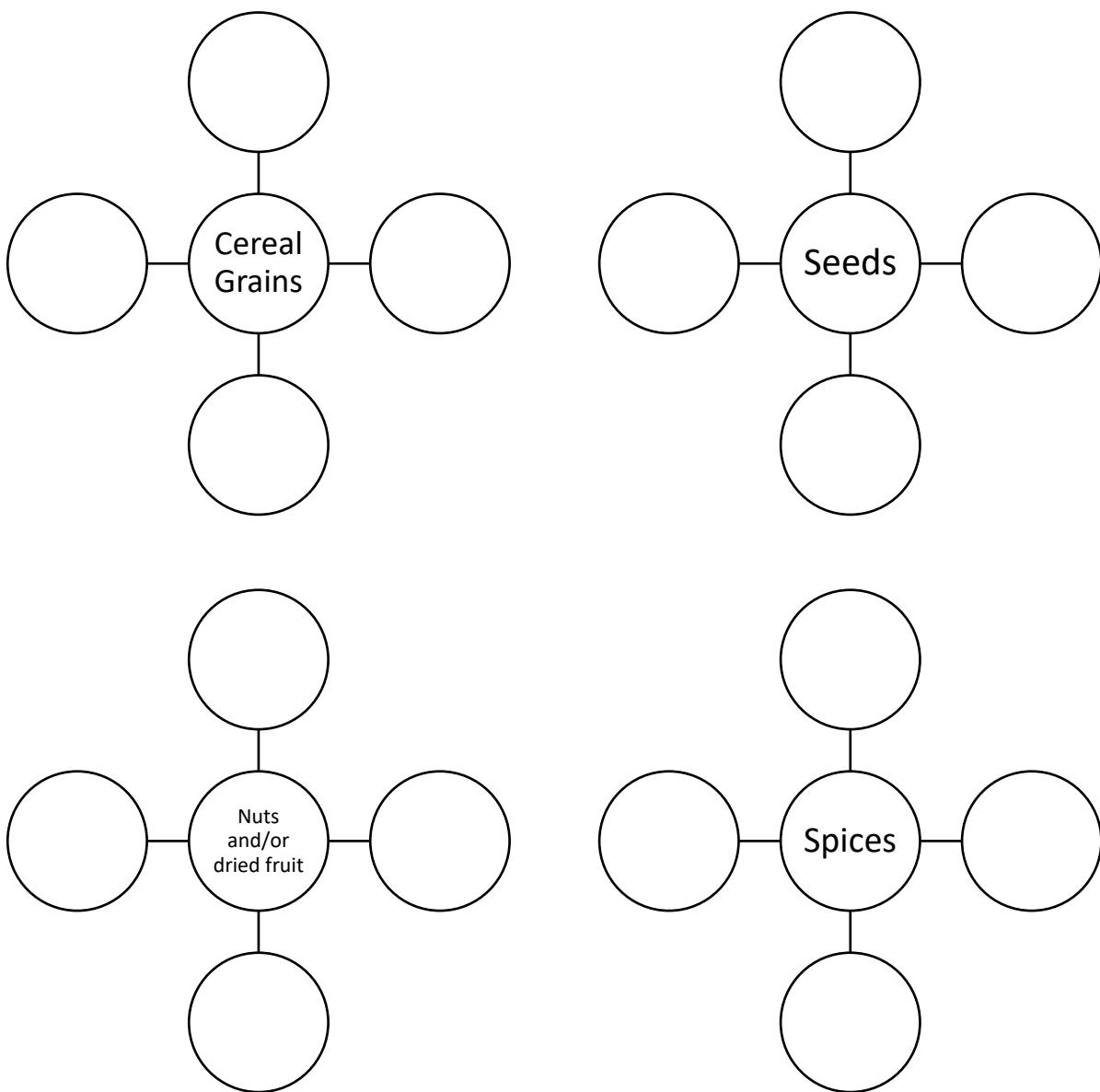
6. What other nutritional considerations should people consider when purchasing breakfast cereal? Justify your response.

Practical Activity Two

Design Brief: Cereal Makeover

Your task is to design your own breakfast cereal that is low in sugar and can be consumed by just adding milk. The breakfast will need to be suitable for children and teenagers. You will need to develop a prototype of this breakfast cereal. About 100 grams should be enough for three serves.

Record all your ideas about the types of ingredients you could include in your breakfast cereal in the diagrams below.



Let's Cook!

Make a 100g sample of your breakfast cereal.

Record the weight of the individual ingredients. You will need to use this in your nutritional analysis.

You could coat the rolled oats with some spices in 2 teaspoons of oil, 1 teaspoon of melted butter, and 1 teaspoon of brown sugar (optional) and **bake** at 180°C on a tray lined with baking paper for about 15 to 20 minutes.

Add remaining ingredients.

Let's Evaluate!**Sensory Analysis**

Conduct a sensory analysis of your breakfast cereal.

Colour in the teaspoons to rate the level of sweetness


Nutritional Analysis

Conduct a nutritional analysis of your breakfast cereal.

Use the website at this link to create a Nutritional Information Panel for your breakfast cereal:

Click on this link: <https://explorefood.foodafactoflife.org.uk/>

1. **Select** calculate a recipe.
2. **Enter** the name of the recipe.
3. **Enter** an ingredient. You might need to use different names for ingredients—type in ‘oats’ instead of rolled oats and select porridge oats.
4. **Enter** the weight of each ingredient.
5. **Save** your work if you need to finish it later.
6. **Click** export for an itemised account of the nutrients in your recipe.
7. **Select** view summary.
8. **Enter** the number of portions and **click** calculate.
9. **Select** create a label.
10. **Click here** to convert the salt from grams to mg: <https://www.rapidtables.com/convert/weight/gram-to-mg.html>
11. **Record** your nutritional information label in the table below:

Breakfast Cereal	Dietary Fibre g per 100g	Saturated Fat g per 100g	Sodium mg per 100g	Sugar g per 100g	Serving Size per 100g

Discussion

Did your breakfast cereal meet the recommendations of the June 2026 targets set by the HFP for breakfast cereal without the fruit of 20 g/100 g sugar? Why? Why not?

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Summary Activity

What is the main idea about the key knowledge & key skills?	
What are policies and regulations?	
What does the term consumer activism mean?	
Provide examples of how each of the following can have a political influence on the food system.	
The manufacturing Industry	
The advertising industry	
Consumer Activism	
Briefly outline the following and summarise their impact on food choices and/or food sovereignty.	
Healthy Food Partnership	

Health Star Rating System	
The Food and Beverage Code	

Exam Preparation

Section A - Multiple Choice Questions (5 marks)

Question 1

Which of the following is not an example of consumer activism in our food system?

- a. The Obesity Policy Coalition releasing a report titled, 'Brands off our Kids,' as part of a campaign against advertising highly processed food to children.
- b. The consumer advocacy group, Choice, campaigning for new regulations regarding hand sanitiser.
- c. The RSPCA coordinating an initiative called 'take the pledge,' where consumers were asked to sign a petition pledging that they will only eat cage-free eggs.
- d. United Dairy Farmers of Victoria campaigning about the unfair price farmers are being paid for their milk.

Question 2

Introducing a tax that would increase the price of drinks containing sugar is an example of:

- a. The political influence in the food system.
- b. Food advertising and marketing.
- c. Consumers activism.
- d. A Price war.

Question 3

Which of the following is not related to food sovereignty?

- a. The promotion of everyone's right to access culturally appropriate and nutritious food.
- b. Farmers having greater control over the decisions that affect their ability to produce food ethically and sustainably.
- c. People only consuming the food they grow.
- d. People's right to determine their own food and agricultural systems.

Question 4

Which of the following does not support consumers in making informed food choices?

- a. The Health Star Rating Scheme that helps consumers compare the nutritional value of similar food products.
- b. Food products that meet healthy food targets.
- c. Advertising high saturated fat, salt and sugary foods at sporting events.
- d. Advertisements that abide by recommended codes of practice.

Question 5

The Food and Beverages Advertising Code aims to protect the rights of consumers by ensuring that the advertising and marketing of food and beverage products in Australia is honest, legal, and truthful. The code is self-regulated by those in the industry.

A likely concern by some consumer activists groups lobbying against misleading food advertisements is:

- a. That they may end up in jail for consumer activism.
- b. People would be able to make more informed food choices.
- c. The information on food products will deter people from buying them.
- d. Advertising and marketing have too much control over the information provided to consumers.

Section B – Short Answer Responses (15 marks)

Question 1 (5 marks)

The Obesity Policy Coalition was established in 2006 by various organisations that were becoming increasingly concerned about the growing rate of overweight and obesity in Australia.

- a. Explain the concept of consumer activism. (2 marks)

- b. Identify a component of food sovereignty. Provide an example of what consumer activists could do to promote this component of food sovereignty. (3 marks)

Question 2 (6 marks)

Food companies use various advertising techniques to provide food information to consumers and encourage them to choose their products.

- a. Explain how politics can influence the advertising and marketing of food products. (2 marks)

- b. Discuss how political influences can have a positive and negative impact on people's food choices. (4 marks)

Question 3 (4 marks)

The Australian and state governments developed the Health Star Rating system through consultation with consumer groups, the manufacturing industry, and public health groups. The system is designed as a comparison tool between multi-ingredient packaged foods. For example, a comparison between a 1.5-star and a 2.5-star frozen pizza could be made. Manufacturers can choose to include the rating on packages of food and beverages; it is not mandated.

An example of the Health Star Rating is below.



Discuss the potential positive and negative impact of the Health Star Rating on food choices. (4 marks)

Exam Preparation

Section A - Multiple Choice Questions (5 marks)

Question 1

Which of the following is not an example of consumer activism in our food system?

- The Obesity Policy Coalition releasing a report titled, 'Brands off our Kids,' as part of a campaign against advertising highly processed food to children.
- The consumer advocacy group, Choice, campaigning for new regulations regarding hand sanitiser.**
- The RSPCA coordinating an initiative called 'take the pledge,' where consumers were asked to sign a petition pledging that they will only eat cage-free eggs.
- United Dairy Farmers of Victoria campaigning about the unfair price farmers are being paid for their milk.

The answer is not A. The Obesity Policy Coalition campaigning against advertising is an example of consumer activism in our food system.

The answer is B. While the consumer advocacy group, Choice, coordinates campaigns related to the food system, campaigning for hand sanitiser is not directly related to the food system.

The answer is not C. The RSPCA asking consumers to sign a pledge is an example of consumer activism in the food system.

The answer is not D. A group campaigning about the price farmers are being paid for milk is an example of consumer activism.

Question 2

Introducing a tax that would increase the price of drinks containing sugar is an example of:

- The political influence in the food system.**
- Food advertising and marketing.
- Consumers activism.
- A Price war.

The answer is A. The government enforces taxes. Therefore, implementing a tax is an example of a political influence on the food for sale in the food system.

The answer is not B. Enforcing a tax is not related to food advertising and marketing.

The answer is not C. There is no reference to consumer activism in the statement/ question.

The answer is not D. This is not an example of a price war. A price war occurs when traders cut prices in an attempt to increase their share of the market.

Question 3

Which of the following is not related to food sovereignty?

- The promotion of everyone's right to access culturally appropriate and nutritious food.
- Farmers having greater control over the decisions that affect their ability to produce food ethically and sustainably.
- People only consuming the food they grow.**
- People's right to determine their own food and agricultural systems.

The answer is not A. This is considered part of the concept of food sovereignty as well as food security.

The answer is not B. This is considered part of the concept of food sovereignty.

The answer is C. People growing their own food can be considered food sovereignty. However, they can still consume food from other sources.

The answer is not D. This is considered part of the concept of food sovereignty.

Question 4

Which of the following does not support consumers in making informed food choices?

- a. The Health Star Rating Scheme that helps consumers compare the nutritional value of similar food products.
- b. Food products that meet healthy food targets.
- c. Advertising high saturated fat, salt and sugary foods at sporting events.
- d. Advertisements that abide by recommended codes of practice.

The answer is not A, B, or D. If followed correctly, all of these actions will help consumers make informed food choices.

The answer is C. Advertising high saturated fat, salt and sugary foods at sporting events often results in people associating positive feelings and a healthy lifestyle.

Question 5

The Food and Beverages Advertising Code aims to protect the rights of consumers by ensuring that the advertising and marketing of food and beverage products in Australia is honest, legal, and truthful. The code is self-regulated by those in the industry.

A likely concern by some consumer activists groups lobbying against misleading food advertisements is:

- a. That they may end up in jail for consumer activism.
- b. People would be able to make more informed food choices.
- c. The information on food products will deter people from buying them.
- d. Advertising and marketing have too much control over the information provided to consumers.

The answer is not A. As long as consumer activists abide by laws, they will not end up in jail due to their campaigning.

The answer is not B. Because the code is self-regulated, food advertisements do not necessarily have to meet the code's requirements. This may result in people making less informed choices, not more informed food choices.

The answer is not C. Consumers not purchasing products would be concerned in the food manufacturing industry, not consumer activists.

The answer is D. The Food and Beverages Advertising Code is self-regulated. Therefore food and marketing can control the information that they provide to consumers.

Section B – Short Answer Responses (15 marks)

Question 1 (5 marks)

The Obesity Policy Coalition was established in 2006 by various organisations that were becoming increasingly concerned about the growing rate of overweight and obesity in Australia.

a. Explain the concept of consumer activism. (2 marks)

For two marks, the student needed to explain the concept of consumer activism.

One possible response is:

Consumer activism is a process whereby people shape other people's attitudes, behaviour, beliefs, and values.

b. Identify a component of food sovereignty. Provide an example of what consumer activists could do to promote this component of food sovereignty. (3 marks)

For one mark, the student needed to identify a component of food sovereignty. Some possible responses are listed below:	For two marks, the student needed to provide a brief example of what consumer activists could do to promote this component of food sovereignty. A response similar to the following was accepted.
Food sovereignty challenges the control of the food supply by large corporations. →	Consumer activists could campaign for small businesses to receive additional funding or government subsidies.
Food sovereignty aims to give farmers greater control of the decisions that affect their ability to produce food ethically and sustainably. →	Consumer activists could campaign for the government to provide free education to farmers, which could equip them with the skills and knowledge to produce food sustainably and ethically.
Food sovereignty promotes everyone's right to access culturally appropriate and nutritious food grown. →	Consumer activists could campaign for people living in the city to access a small plot of land where they can grow food from their culture.
Food sovereignty promotes everyone's right to food that is distributed in ethically and ecologically sound ways. →	Consumer activists could campaign for the labelling of food products to include the origin of ingredients so consumers can select local foods that have traveled less.
Food sovereignty promotes people's right to democratically determine their own food and agricultural systems. →	Consumer activists could campaign for farmers to be able to sell their produce direct to the consumer.
Food sovereignty focuses on ensuring that the health of people and the health of the planet are considered in the food system. →	Consumer activists could campaign for processed food to contain less saturated fat, salt, and sugar.

Question 2 (6 marks)

Food companies use various advertising techniques to provide food information to consumers and encourage them to choose their products.

a. Explain how politics can influence the advertising and marketing of food products. (2 marks)

For two marks, the student needed to provide an example of how politics can influence the advertising and marketing of food products.

One possible response is:

The government can influence the advertising and marketing of food products by developing policies (guidelines and recommendations) and regulations (rules) about the advertising and marketing of food products.

b. Discuss how political influences can have a positive and negative impact on people's food choices. (4 marks)

For two marks, the student needed to explain how political influences can have a positive influence on people's food choices.

One possible response is:

Regulations can positively impact people's ability to make nutritious food choices because they are rules. For example, if a law was made about sugary drinks costing more money, then this might influence people not to buy sugary drinks and perhaps choose healthier drinks.

For two marks, the student needed to explain how political influences can have a negative influence on people's food choices.

One possible response is:

Policies are not rules. They are recommendations. Policies that encourage food manufacturers to reduce the amount of sugar in processed food could have a negative impact on people's food choices because they are only recommendations, and food manufacturers do not have to adhere to them.

Question 3 (4 marks)

The Australian and state governments developed the Health Star Rating system through consultation with consumer groups, the manufacturing industry, and public health groups. The system is designed as a comparison tool between multi-ingredient packaged foods. For example, a comparison between a 1.5-star and a 2.5-star frozen pizza could be made. Manufacturers can choose to include the rating on packages of food and beverages; it is not mandated.

An example of the Health Star Rating is below.



Discuss the potential positive and negative impact of the Health Star Rating on food choices. (4 marks)

For two marks, the student needed to discuss the positive impact the Health Star Rating could have on food choices.

One possible response is:

The Health Star Rating allows consumers to compare the nutritional value of one food to another similar food. The higher the rating, the more nutritious the food.

For two marks, the student needed to discuss the negative impact the Health Star Rating could have on food choices.

One possible response is:

The Health Star Rating is not mandatory. Therefore, food manufacturers do not have to include it on their food packages. This results in consumers being less informed about the healthiest food product.