

'Radical changes needed' to tackle obesity timebomb

● Food body gives recommendations including cutting portion size

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Radical changes including a sugar tax and regulation of junk food promotions have been recommended by government advisers as a new report revealed sugar consumption in Scotland has failed to improve in five years.

Food Standards Scotland (FSS) made a raft of recommendations yesterday on how to tackle Scotland's "health



↑ Ross Finnie says it can not be left to individuals

time-bomb" of obesity and poor diet, including reductions in promotion, advertising and portion control.

Experts have predicted Scotland could face adult obesity levels of 40 per cent by 2030 if current trends continue.

The independent food body will advise ministers to consider how a sugar tax could be brought in, allowing the industry a 12-month grace

period to come up with an alternative to reduce sugar consumption levels.

Despite reductions a 21 per cent drop in sugary drink purchases since 2010, the amount of sugar purchasing has not changed. Industry representatives said punishing the industry which employs 34,000 people in Scotland would be a "retrograde step" and reformulation of products would be a better move.

Ross Finnie, FSS chair, said: "There can be few in any doubt now as to the gravity of the health timebomb related to poor diet and obesity facing our nation.

"Individual responsibility around food choices, exercise and activity levels remain important, but this cannot be left to individuals alone."

A recent study revealed that a sugary drinks tax in Mexico reduced consumption rates by 12 per cent in its first year.

The report also scrutinised Scots buying habits which confirms large quantities of discretionary foods such as biscuits, cakes and chocolate are being consumed, particularly in the lead-up to Christmas where an additional 9,000 calories is consumed by every adult in Scotland.

Obesity campaigners hailed the measures as a turning point in addressing Scotland's battle with poor diet but urged FSS to go further through reformulation of products and better labelling.

Lorraine Tulloch, programme lead for Obesity Action Scotland, said: "If we are to turn the tide on the crisis we face with obesity and overweight in Scotland we need such bold actions."

David Thomson, chief executive at the Scottish Food and

Drink Federation, said: "Punishing and legislating against an industry that employs 34,000 people in Scotland would be a retrograde step."

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