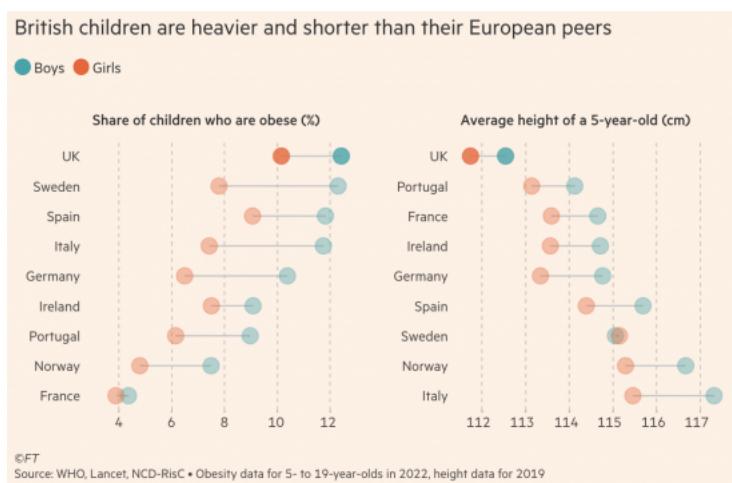


Creating the data to beat the curse of ultra-processed ...

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As the FT [has noted today](#) in a free-to-access article, as many as one in 6 10 and 11-year-olds in the UK might now be obese.

As they also note, this is a British problem:



Our children are heavier and shorter than many of their European peers.

The explanation appears to be down to diet - and the propensity of ultra-processed food in it.

The proportion of ultra-processed food is a very clear marker for obesity, ill health, diabetes, metabolic disease and many other diseases linked to glucose-induced inflammation, including Alzheimer's. This, then, is an issue throughout life.

What should we do about it in that case? I suggest that the obvious goal is three-fold.

First, we need to appraise the scale of the problem.

Second, we need to decide how to tackle it.

Third, we need a metric for success that might work in the short-term when the problem is long-term in nature.

Others are more expert than I am on the second issue. I will not intrude there, but I will at stages one and three.

Collecting data on this issue is really easy. Our supermarkets have it. They know:

- * What they sell
- * How ultra-processed it is
- * Where they sell it
- * And, who they sell it to via data in loyalty card schemes.

So, all we need is a law that requires them to share this readily available information, and all the data that is required to appraise the scale of this problem would be available. That data would need appraisal, but once it exists, that's the easy bit. The problem is always about getting the right data. That problem I have solved.

That then suggests the required metric for appraisal of progress. Quite simply, the proportion of ultra-processed food that is sold must be reduced. Targets can be set. Progress can very easily be appraised. This really would not be difficult. People would be better off, as would society be, as would the NHS be in the longer-term as we would live healthier lives.

There is, almost certainly, no change that could have a greater impact on demand for NHS services than reducing the consumption of ultra-processed food. I have suggested how to set up a system to appraise this. Now, others need to agree on:

- * What to tax
- * How to change packaging
- * How to change advertising
- * How to compensate those who might need more money, space and other resources to manage non-processed food
- * How to provide universal free school meals
- * And other related programmes.

Would that really be that hard? I suggest not. I even suggest it could be self-funding for those who think such things matter (even though they don't).

What are the objections?

And why would a politician say no?