

Putting SAD behind us

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There had to come a moment when I would say I agreed with something the Donald Trump administration said in the USA, and, to my surprise, it has arrived. The [Guardian reported last week](#) that:

The Trump administration has released updated dietary guidelines for Americans on Wednesday that emphasize eating whole and minimally processed foods, scaling back refined carbohydrates, and “declaring war” on added sugars.

The recommendations encourage “prioritizing high-quality protein, healthy fats, fruits, vegetables and whole grains” while steering clear of highly processed foods. Robert F Kennedy Jr, the health and human services (HHS) secretary, and Brooke Rollins, the agriculture secretary, are presenting the new guidance at a White House briefing.

They added this:

“Today, our government declares war on added sugar,” Kennedy said. “Highly processed foods loaded with additives, added sugar and excess salt damage health and should be avoided. As secretary of health and human services, my message is clear: eat real food.”

You can put aside for a moment the fact that this comes from the Trump administration. Forget, too, that it comes from Robert Kennedy Jr, whose opinions on many subjects I find fall within the range from appalling to straightforwardly offensive. For example, on issues around neurodivergence and many of his claims on vaccination, he is just plainly wrong. But on this issue of diet, he is right, and I think it is appropriate to say so. If one is to criticise, it is also appropriate to admit that your opponent has, just occasionally, got something right.

To contextualise this, one of the big problems of the last 45 years has been the global expansion of what might be called the SAD, which stands for the Standard American Diet. This is, of course, based upon excess consumption of almost all foods, and most especially those that are ultra-processed. That led to an obesity crisis in the US long before it spread to Europe, as ultra-processed food production and marketing were

expanded worldwide by profit-driven corporations that care nothing for their customers' well-being or the quality of the food they produce. Many of the problems inside the American health system, and to some extent within society, can be attributed to that diet, just as the growth of chronic illness in the UK is similarly attributable, in large part, to much of the UK population being poisoned on a persistent and deliberate basis by the foodstuffs that are made available to them at affordable prices by our so-called food manufacturers and supermarkets.

Now, Robert Kennedy Jr has said that reducing sugars, which will never be achieved without avoiding ultra-processed foods, and eating what might be described as proper foods, is essential to restoring the health of people in the USA. I agree, but what, of course, was absent from what he said was:

- * any indication as to how this will actually happen,
- * whether penalties will be imposed upon manufacturers for causing this problem, or
- * how those who want to make this transition will be assisted in both time and monetary terms.

The result is that, whilst what he says is correct, the likelihood that anything will happen to correct the crisis in US healthcare is very limited, most especially given the changes in the Trump administration's support for healthcare costs.

So, whilst I welcome the rhetoric from Robert Kennedy Jr., the reality is that the US remains exactly where it was. The Trump administration is actually doing nothing to stand up to the toxic food industry, and countries like the UK will have to eventually do this themselves. I look forward to a government with the courage to do so. The Greens really need to take this issue on.