

# Missing Presumed Forgotten: Neglected Areas of Health Reform

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# The Problem

- ◆ Health Promotion and Prevention is a key area where obvious long term savings can be made
- ◆ Governments seem reluctant to commit any funding
- ◆ Why prevention programmes should be higher on the list of priorities.

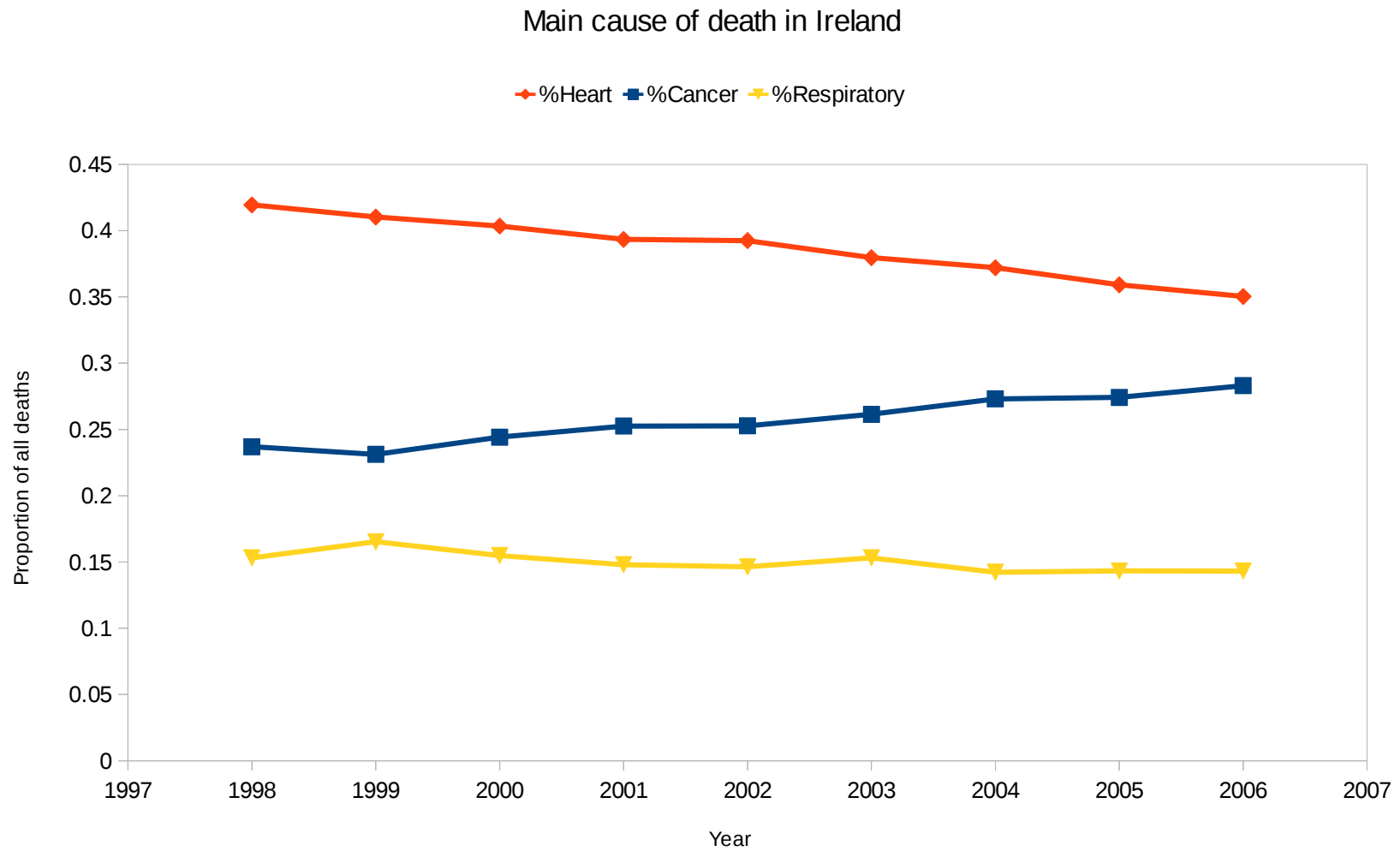


# Food – a case study

- ◆ The main causes of death in Ireland are well known to us all
- ◆ Heart disease
- ◆ Cancer
- ◆ Respiratory disease



# CSO Mortality data





# What can be done?

- ◆ We spend a lot of money,
  - ◆ including most of our acute hospital budget,
- ◆ treating people in the year or two before they die
- ◆ This is not worthless, but we're not winning either



# Obesity

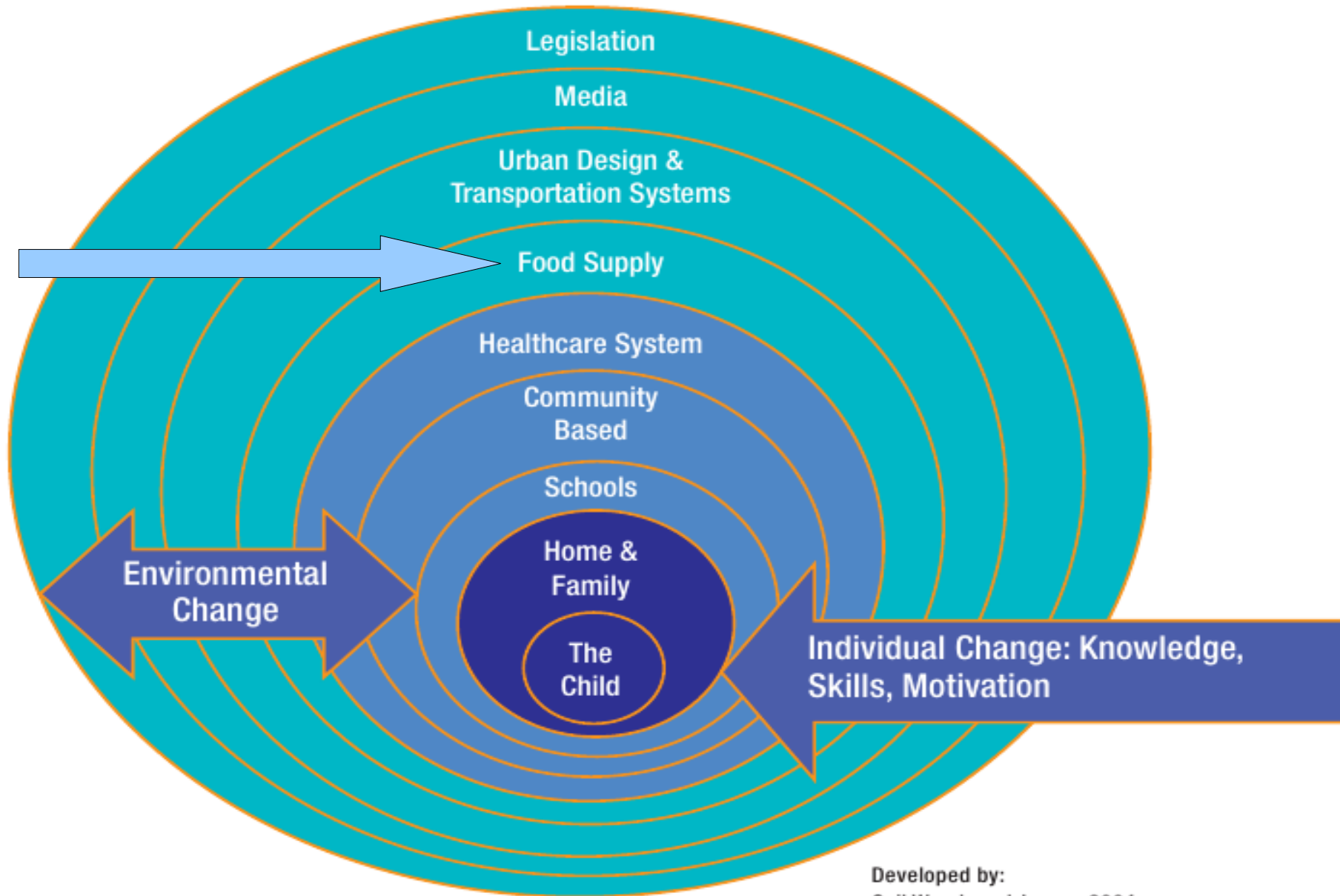
- ♦ There is a major health issue looming
- ♦ There is a risk that our children will die younger than us, because of spiralling levels of obesity



# Food

- ◆ Food is a big part of the problem
  - ◆ but not the whole story
- ◆ We eat too much
- ◆ A lot of our food has hidden calories
- ◆ It is designed to be addictive, hitting much the same neural pathways as cocaine and betting
  - ◆ (David Kessler, *The End of Overeating*, 2009)

## Framework for Obesity Prevention



Developed by:  
Gail Woodward-Lopez, 2004



# Food in Ireland

- ♦ A major concern in the Irish diet is the overconsumption of foods high in fats and sugar, such as oils, butter, cakes and biscuits.
- ♦ On average, SLÁN 2007 respondents consumed 7.3 daily servings of these types of food, which, according to the Food Pyramid, should be 'used sparingly' (i.e. less than 3 daily servings) (Slán 2007).

# *trans* fatty acids in food

- ♦ tFAs are common in processed foods and fast food generally
- ♦ There is good evidence that they increase the risk of heart disease
- ♦ There is no evidence of any benefit to humans from tFA's, but they are popular with the food industry
- ♦ Denmark and New York have banned their use in foods

# tFAs in Ireland

- ◆ There seem to be no Irish data on intake
- ◆ Levels in most fast foods tested were low (FASI 2008), but 1 in 4 products tested had high levels.
- ◆ Are we taking an unnecessary risk?





# Salt

- ◆ Salt intake is far too high
- ◆ The mean is over 8g day
- ◆ This is eight times what we need
- ◆ This is 50% over the maximum recommended intake (6g/day) set by the FSAI





# Where does it come from (Slan 2007)

**Table 19: Contribution of food groups to overall salt intake**

Food groups	Sodium (g)	Salt (g)	Contribution to overall salt intake %
Cereals, breads, and potatoes*	1.1	2.7	34
Meat, fish and poultry	0.7	1.8	22
Soups, sauces and spreads	0.5	1.1	14
Vegetables	0.4	0.9	11
Dairy products and fats	0.3	0.8	10
Sweets and savoury snacks	0.2	0.6	8
Drinks	0.0	0.1	1
Fruits	0.0	0.0	0
Milk	0.0	0.0	0

\* Cereals and breads are the primary contributors to salt intake. However, potatoes were also included in this category since the FFQ analysis software did not permit the separation of these food items.

# Voluntary reduction in salt isn't working

- ◆ Last published FSAI data on salt content in foods is from 2008
- ◆ It has gone from absurdly high (2001) to merely ridiculously high (2008)
- ◆ This is a major contributor to stroke, to coronary heart disease, to renal disease, and premature death.
- ◆ You all know this...

# Sugar

- ◆ There is little specific data on sugar intakes in Ireland
- ◆ Sugars get lumped in with carbohydrates in most nutritional analyses
- ◆ One paper reports intakes of 106-108g/d of sugar (Joyce et al. 2008)

# US data on sugar

- The US average intake is about 130g/d
- The US recommended intake varies greatly by age, sex and activity, but the highest is 72g/d, and the lowest 12g/d (AHA 2009)





# FSAI - Our Role

- ◆ The principal function of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) is to take all reasonable steps to ensure that food produced, distributed or marketed in the State meets the highest standards of food safety and hygiene reasonably available.
- ◆ The FSAI aims to ensure that food complies with legal requirements, or where appropriate with recognised codes of good practice.

# Nice try, but not good enough

- The FSAI do a good job, but not good enough
- Nutrition is not seen as part of food safety
- Why? - we'll get back to that.



# How to win

- ◆ Take health seriously
- ◆ Push healthy policies everywhere
- ◆ Schools, workplaces, homes,
- ◆ This is not health promotion – this is healthy public policy
  - ◆ and it works...





# Working examples in Ireland

- Workplace smoking ban
- Food Dudes in primary schools
- Atlantic Philanthropies' Disadvantaged Children and Youth program





# Alternatives?

- ◆ HSE – budget down
  - ◆ €540 million 2010
  - ◆ €700 million 2011
  - ◆ Any bets for 2012?
- ◆ We can not afford to ignore cost-effective public health interventions
- ◆ Voluntary efforts are not working, so regulation is needed

# Nutrition and Food safety

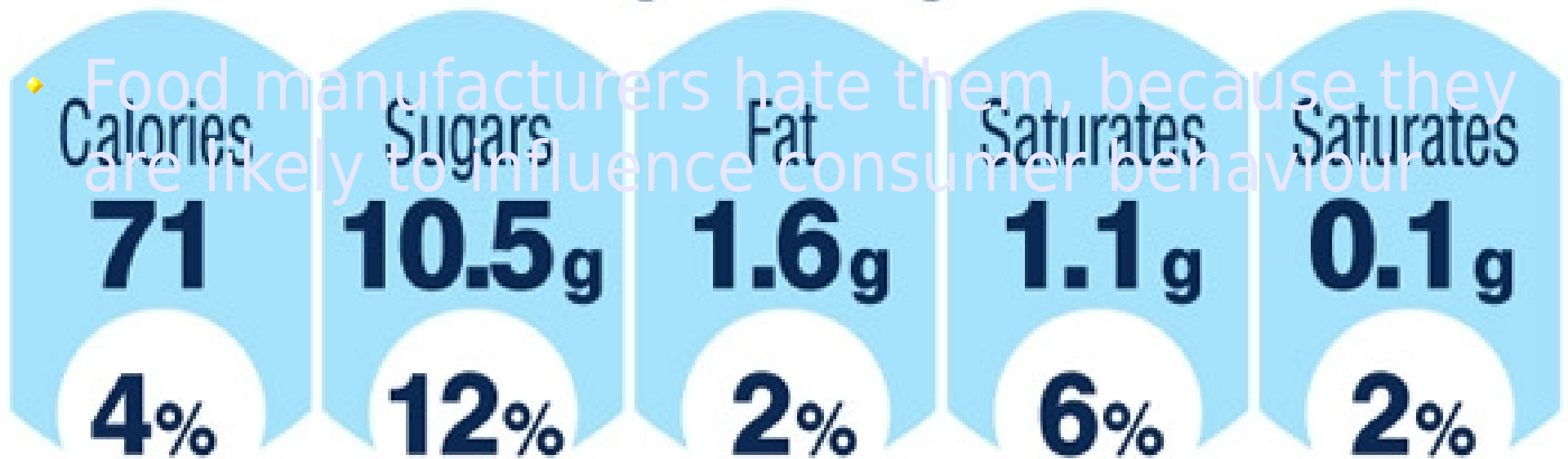
- The traffic lights story
- What's going on?



# The traffic lights story

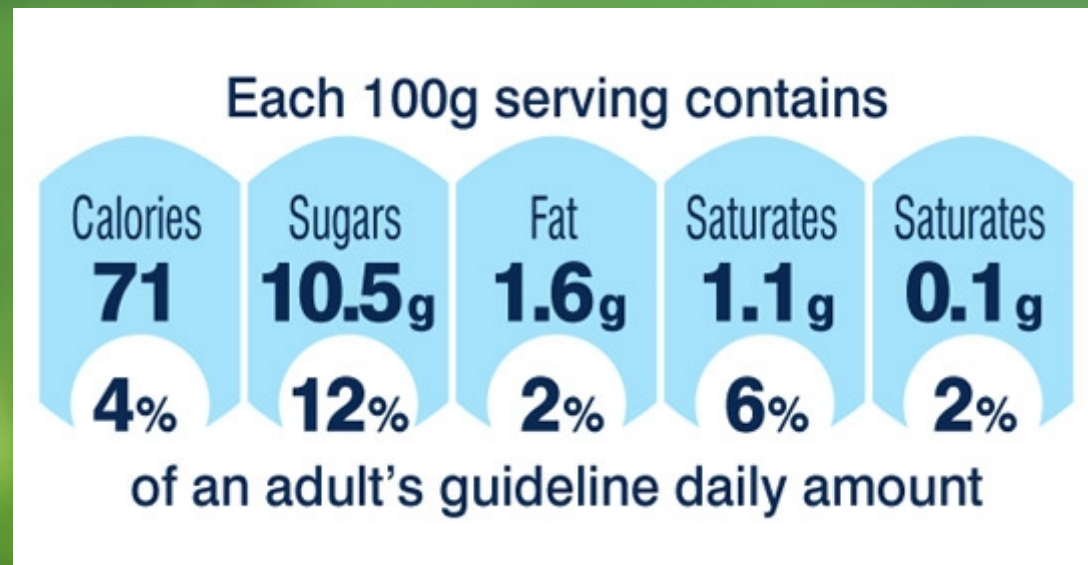
- ♦ Traffic lights are evidence based intelligible food labels designed to be comprehensible to the general public

**Each 100g serving contains**



**of an adult's guideline daily amount**

# Current food labels





# Incomprehensible by intent

- ◆ These were designed to be helpful if you have a PhD in nutrition
- ◆ They are little use for the average busy mother, doing her best to feed a family on a limited budget



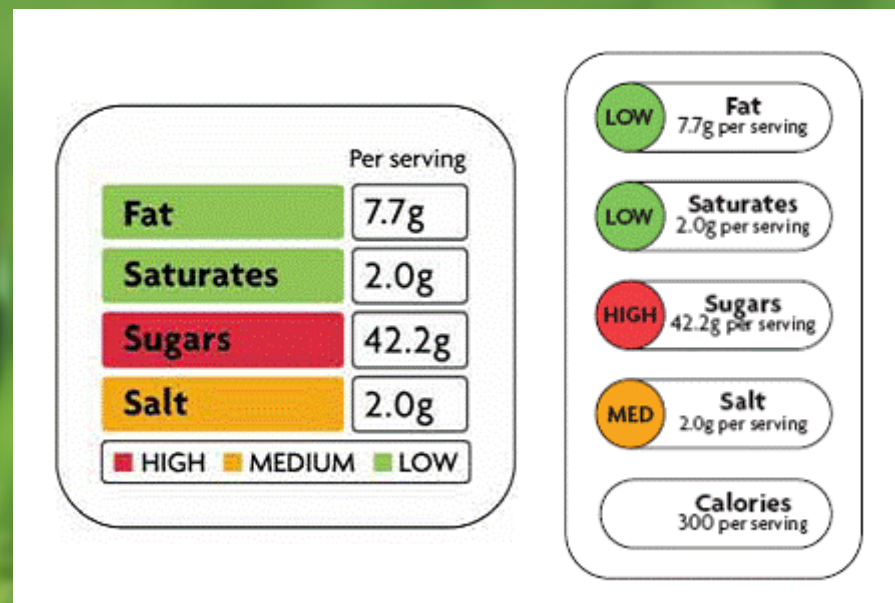
# Recommended alternatives

READY MEAL. 400g. CONTAINS 1 SERVING

Each serving contains ...

MED	MED	HIGH	LOW	MED
360	13.2g	8.0g	10.8g	2g
CALORIES	FAT	SATURATES	SUGARS	SALT
18%	19%	40%	12%	33%

OF YOUR GUIDELINE DAILY AMOUNT



# Rejected after a brutal lobbying campaign

- Led by the food industry
- Acceded to by our spineless political classes
- Biggest defeat for public health in Europe so far
- The losers are largely poorer people





We can't afford this type of messing  
around





# What's really going on?

- ◆ There is a huge mismatch between the financial needs of the food industry and our actual needs for nutrition
- ◆ The food industry is well organised, has lots of money, and close links with Government
- ◆ Their victims are disproportionately poor, don't realise why they are dying, and have no voice

# Private profits and public costs

- ♦ The food industry profits, and the rest of us pay the costs
- ♦ Same business model as the banks, and property developers



# Can we do better, and still make money?

- ◆ Yes!
- ◆ There are better models for a sustainable healthy food industry
- ◆ Ireland is well placed to profit from them
- ◆ Will we?

