

12th June 2019

For the attention of;

Rebecca Stimson, head of UK Policy, Facebook

Katy Minshall, head of UK Policy, Twitter

Katie O'Donovan, Public Policy manager, GoogleUK

Tara Hopkins, head of Public Policy EMEA, Instagram

Hugh Millward, director Corporate, External & Legal Affairs, Microsoft

Stephen Collins, senior director of International Public Policy, Snapchat



Dear above addressees,

We are writing to you to request the implementation of policy within your company that will prohibit the collection of data from children under the age of 18 to prevent young people being targeted by junk food advertisers.

Young people are the main recipients of food marketing activity and are the most vulnerable to its effects.

We lead a food resilience research programme, investigating the sustainability of global food systems, including consumer health, and our research has found direct links between exposure to marketing of processed foods and beverages and an increase in consumption among children.

We are calling on Governments to introduce legislation to prevent marketers targeting young people with advertising for HFSS items (high fat, sugar, and salt), in an effort to reduce rates of childhood obesity.

Social media companies need to take responsibility for this issue with a pledge to stop collecting data from account users under the age of 18 to prevent advertisers from accessing their online profile.

Between the ages of 8 to 11, almost a quarter of children in the UK have a social media profile. That figures rises to nearly three quarters when you look at 12 to 15 year olds, and they are online for more than 13 hours a week. Digital media affords marketers the ability to speak directly to these young people, using very persuasive techniques.

The danger is, digital marketing is targeted to individual users based on their digital profile, irrespective of age. We see different things online than children; we can't see what advertising is being directed at them.

As the operator of the platforms where this activity is taking place we would like to see you take action to stop it.

Signed,

A collection of handwritten signatures in various colors (black, blue, purple) and styles, arranged in three rows. The signatures include names such as Katherine Doug, Anyana, Jason Millward, E Boyland, P. Call, Mylajapuram, M. Reed, K. Blair, Louise, Bernadette Moore, Bob Doherty, and Carolyn Swisher.

N8 AgriFood Signatures:

Professor Katherine Denby, Academic Lead, University of York

Anthonia James, Operations Director

Professor Jason Halford, Improved Consumption and Health Lead, University of Liverpool

Dr Emma Boyland, Senior Lecturer in Appetite and Obesity, University of Liverpool

Professor Louise Dye, Nutrition Chair, University of Leeds

Professor Bob Doherty, Food Systems Academic Lead, University of York

Dr Katerina Psarikidou, Improved Consumption and Health Lead, Lancaster University

Professor Peter Jackson, Improved Consumption and Health Lead, The University of Sheffield

Professor Karen Bloor, Improved Consumption and Health Lead, The University of York

Dr Bernadette Moore, Improved Consumption and Health Lead, University of Leeds

Professor David Johnson, N8 Chair in Microbial Ecology, The University of Manchester

Professor Carolyn Summerbell, Improved Consumption and Health Lead, Durham University

Professor Mariana Rufino, Sustainable Food Production Chair, Lancaster University

Professor Tim Daniell, Sustainable Food Production Lead, The University of Sheffield

Professor Mark Reed, N8 AgriFood Chair, Newcastle University

Supporting Signatures:

Dr Jennifer Lyn Baker, Childhood Obesity Task Force Co Chair, European Association for the Study of Obesity (EASO)