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RESEARCH TENDER CALL



TENDER INFORMATION DOCUMENT


Project Reference No.: 02-2025

Project Title: Creating healthy and supportive food environments - an examination of out of home food marketing on the island of Ireland

1. Background

The Food-EPI (The Healthy Food Environment Policy Index) best practice statement notes that effective policies be implemented by the government to ensure that unhealthy foods i.e. foods high in sugar, fat and salt (HFSS), are not commercially promoted to children including adolescents in settings where children gather e.g. preschools, schools, sport and cultural events (Harrington et al 2020). There are commitments in the obesity policies in both jurisdictions to examine and introduce restrictions on promotion and advertising for HFSS foods aimed at children (Department of Health 2016, Department of Health 2012). This is underpinned by the recommendation from the WHO that, given the complexity of obesity, policies to address it must be wide-ranging and comprehensive, reaching individuals across the life course and targeting inequalities (WHO 2022).

A 2022 review of the literature demonstrated that government-led policies to restrict advertising of HFSS foods in out of home spaces or on publicly owned assets are warranted and that policy adoption and implementation is feasible. The studies included in the review highlight the global and ubiquitous nature of advertising of HFSS foods in out of home spaces and on publicly owned assets. Combined with the broader evidence on the impact of food marketing on children's food preferences and intake, the findings of the literature review suggest that government-led policies are necessary to reduce children's exposure to HFSS food marketing (Chung et al 2022).

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Several jurisdictions have successfully implemented regulation that bans the advertising of HFSS food and beverages on government-owned assets. Chung et al (2022) identified nine jurisdictions that have adopted policies to restrict the advertising of HFSS foods in out of home spaces or on publicly owned assets. Four of these policies were implemented at the national level, and five were within a city or state/province. The Food Foundation references significant achievements in a number of local authorities in England including The Mayor of London's Healthier Food advertising Policy, Bristol City Council, Royal Borough of Greenwich, Haringey council, Merton council and Southwark council where policies have been developed and adopted to ensure healthier food advertising. This approach supports citizens, particularly children, to live in healthier environments (Sustain 2022).

A 2022 scoping review by Finlay et al (Finlay et al 2022) highlights the extent of out of home food marketing of HFSS foods globally and the powerful methods used within this marketing. This review pointed to the need for consistency in defining and measuring out of home food marketing to enable comparison across time and place. There is no known published data on the measure of out of home food advertising on the island of Ireland and neither is there a public resource that can be used by policy makers and stakeholders to progress regulation of out of home food advertising.

2. Objective/Knowledge Gap:


This piece of work is being undertaken to provide a measure of out of home food marketing on the island of Ireland, to generate a dataset that can be updated later by others as required. This could act as a baseline for policy monitoring and be used by local authorities and other relevant stakeholders to develop and adopt policies that ensure healthier food environment going forward.

This research is being commissioned to develop a data set specific to the island of Ireland on the nature of out of home food marketing including:

- the selection of criteria¹ to define out of home food marketing

¹ Out-of-home (OOH) advertising is defined by several key criteria that distinguish it from other forms of marketing including but not limited to:

- Location i.e. outside of the consumer's home including public spaces, streets, transportation hubs, and other areas where people go about their daily lives.
- Public visibility: The marketing is placed in prominent, easily noticeable locations that are visible to a wide audience.

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- the determination of the type, location and density of out of home food marketing.
- A representative measurement of seasonal and occasion-based variation in exposure to HFSS foods via out-of-home advertising over the course of one calendar year – retrospectively.
- A comparison of proportion of HFSS food advertising vs non HFSS food advertising using an appropriate nutrient profiling model such as the WHO 2023 nutrient profile model.
- the measurement of the exposure of children and young adults by assessing the proximity to schools and settings where they gather such as sports and activity centres, play areas etc.
- the determination of the difference in exposure by socio economic position and urban/rural.
- the exploration and assessment of the tactics and behavioural approach used within out of home advertising.

Since advertisement cycles are short and rapidly changing, the methodology should consider how any datasets generated are developed in such a way that they can be used by others later. The datasets should be visualised or mapped for ease of use and interrogation.

3. Approach

It is proposed that the aims and objectives of the research are met by using a mixture of methods drawing on existing data. Applicants can source the data on the products advertised and the location of the adverts through Safefood's media buying company (Contact Safefood for more information). The research should ensure the generation of representative data presented in a

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- Format variety: OOH encompasses a wide range of formats, including billboards; street furniture (e.g., bus shelters, benches); transit advertising (e.g., buses, taxis, subways); posters; digital screens in public areas; airport displays
 - Continuous exposure: Unlike other forms of advertising, OOH marketing provide 24/7 exposure and cannot be turned off or blocked
 - Non-store environment: While OOH advertising occurs outside the home, it typically does not include advertising inside stores selling the advertised merchandise
 - Audience reach: OOH advertising is designed to reach consumers as they move through public spaces, whether commuting, shopping, or engaging in leisure activities
 - Visual impact: OOH ads are often large-scale and highly visual to capture attention quickly

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visual way that can be used by others in the future to monitor policy implementation and evaluate impact of initiatives to address the food environment as required.

Technical Specification

(a) Scope of research

- The primary goal of this research is to generate data on the type, density and location of out of home food advertisement on the island of Ireland and to relate this to the parameters listed under the objectives. The behavioural approach and advertising methods and tactics used must also be assessed. The data should also be made available in a visual format e.g. maps, although not limited to maps. This can involve a sampling methodology but should generate an appropriately representative data set on the island to ensure validity and robustness.

(b)


- Establish a baseline measure of out of home food advertising on the island of Ireland that is available for that can be used by others in the future.
- The research should use existing protocols where available, e.g. INFORMAS protocols <https://www.informas.org/protocols/>
- The research data should be provided in a format whereby it can be shared and published on open data platforms such as <https://data.gov.ie/> and <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/opendatani-portal>
- The research should be collaborative across the island of Ireland and include a number of relevant disciplines such as public health, geographical information systems, marketing, nutrition and other relevant fields.

It should be noted that SafeFood is not an active participant in the project and sole responsibility lies with the successful tenderer.

(c) Literature review

A brief literature review, providing the rationale and full description of the methodology and approach should be provided.

(d) Methodology

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A full justification and rationale for the proposed methodology and analytical approaches will be required. It will be necessary to indicate for all aspects of the project how the proposed data will be managed, analysed and reported.

Establish robust methods for use on the island of Ireland based on existing valid measures for


- the determination of criteria to define out of home marketing
- determining the type, location and density of out of home food marketing
- comparing the of proportion of HFSS food advertising vs non HFSS food advertising
- measuring the exposure of children and young adults by assessing the proximity to schools and settings where they gather such as sports and activity centres, play areas etc.
- generating a representative measurement of seasonal and occasion-based variation in exposure to HFSS foods via out-of-home advertising over the course of one calendar year
- determining difference in exposure by socio economic position and urban/rural
- exploring and assessing the tactics and behavioural approach used within out of home advertising

(e) Analysis

In addition to working with SafeFood's media buying company, applicants should demonstrate how they will access any additional required existing data relating to out of home food advertising, the socio-economic profile of the population, proximity to key settings for children and young adults, and the urban/rural nature of the location in which the advertising is situated to out of home food advertising.

(f) Data handling and Reporting

- The contractor will submit to SafeFood, on a six-monthly basis, an interim report containing details of the progress for each deliverable of the project.
- The contractor is responsible for collating all results and a final report will be submitted to SafeFood on completion of the study.
- All forms, documentation and electronic files must be retained by the contractor for SafeFood for a period of seven years in case of issues arising after the completion of the research.

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(g) Quality assurance

- Ethical approval will be an essential component where data collection from participants is involved.
- The contractor will use validated methods where applicable and will apply best practice quality controls to approaches.
- To ensure transparency and reproducibility, all data sources used in the research must be specified, and all data used must be explicitly specified and justified.
- SafeFood may visit the contractors during the course of the research to assess how the work is being carried out.

4. Proposed Activities/Deliverables

- A report and executive summary for publication to the SafeFood website.
- The mapping data in a format that can be made available to others for further analysis, use and interrogation.
- Evidence to inform future policies, public health campaigns and initiatives to shape the regulation of out of home food advertising on the island of Ireland.
- Dissemination of the report and findings to key stakeholders and audiences including policy makers, media, researchers, the public and members of the All-island Obesity Action forum members and other relevant audiences via a workshop or webinar.


5. Evaluation of Tenders

Quality of the proposal:

- ✓ Anticipated deliverables;
- ✓ Research method and facilities;
- ✓ Value for money;
- ✓ Potential for application;
- ✓ Work plan, including the overall timeframe.

Quality of Applicants:

- ✓ Experience in subject area;
- ✓ Quality Assurance and Quality Control measures in place.

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Please note that the successful applicant must sign a data processing agreement that will govern the processing of personal data as part of this project.

6. Duration of Project

This project will be 10 months duration.

7. Tender Application Forms and Guidelines

The Tender Application Form and associated Guidelines can be downloaded from <https://www.safefood.net/research>. They can also be obtained by emailing research@safefood.net, quoting the project reference number **02-2025**. Alternatively, please contact SafeFood as per the details below.


Ms. Gillian Fox
Research Coordinator
SafeFood
7 Eastgate Avenue
Little Island
Cork
T45 RXO1

Tel: + 3532304100

The closing date for receipt of applications by SafeFood is no later than **4pm Friday 20th June 2025**.

8. References

Chung A, Zorbas C, Riesenbergs D, Sartori A, Kennington K, Ananthapavan J, Backholer K. Policies to restrict unhealthy food and beverage advertising in out of home spaces and on publicly owned assets: A scoping review of the literature. *Obes Rev.* 2022 Feb;23(2):e13386. doi: 10.1111/obr.13386. Epub 2021 Nov 16. PMID: 34783421.

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