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Photo attached caption embedded

27<sup>th</sup> May 2017

### **Minister Creed publishes long term evaluation of Food Dudes programme 2010 - 2016**

The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Michael Creed TD., has today welcomed the findings of a long term evaluation of the Food Dudes Healthy Eating Programme 2010–2016, undertaken by the Institute of Food and Health, University College Dublin.

Publishing the report, Minister Creed said: *“In the current environment where childhood obesity is a global concern, the Food Dudes Healthy Eating Programme is an effective initiative. This evaluation shows that the programme has a significant impact over a six year period and identifies the importance of parental support, to ensure that Food Dudes continues to have a lasting positive impact on children’s fruit and vegetable consumption.”*

Funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the European Commission and managed by Bord Bia, the initial Food Dudes programme was implemented in over 95% of national schools. A follow-up Food Dudes Boost programme is underway with a strong focus on the Junior Cycle as recommended by the Healthy Ireland: Obesity Policy and Action Plan 2016-2025. Food Dudes Boost was run in over 700 schools and reached more than 120,000 students in school year 2016/2017.

#### **Evaluation Key findings :**

Prior to the 2010 intervention, 54% of pupils in the groups analysed brought one or more portions of **fruit** to school. Following Food Dudes, that increased to 83%. In 2016, 6 years later, the percentage was 67%, that is higher than the 2010 baseline, and increased to 75% following the Boost programme.

For **vegetables**, the results were more significant. Prior to the 2010 intervention, 6% of pupils brought one or more portions of vegetables to school. Immediately after the Food Dudes programme was run in the schools sampled, the number of pupils bringing one or more portions of vegetables to school increased to 57% . By 2016, the percentage had decreased to 12% but was still higher than the 2010 baseline, and increased to 27% following the Food Dudes Boost programme.

### **Other findings:-**

The programme is particularly effective in younger children, with the proportion of junior pupils bringing and consuming vegetables at school increasing by more than four-fold.

Another finding was that the majority of children ate what was provided in their lunchbox even when extra fruit and vegetable portions were provided, highlighting the important role and influence of parents. A desire for increased parental involvement in the programme was cited by parents and teachers, when interviewed, and could further improve consumption rates.

Concluding, the Minister said *“the report confirms the programme has a positive long-term impact on the behaviour of primary school children, encouraging them to eat more fruit and vegetables both in school and at home, and helping them develop a liking for these foods”* .

The full report is available on the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine website: <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/customerservice/schoolschemes/fooddudes/FoodDudesEvaluation201016250517.pdf>

### **Note for Editors**

The Food Dudes Healthy Eating Programme is an evidence-based incentivised behaviour-changing programme, designed to change children’s eating habits for life. The programme uses a combination of psychological (role-modelling and rewards) and biological (repeated tasting) factors to bring about and sustain this behavioural change. It was developed by the Food and Activity Research Unit, Bangor University, Wales and is supported financially by the Department and the E.U. Commission.

A follow-up Food Dudes Boost programme is underway with a strong focus on the Junior Cycle – involving a 16-day tasting intervention period while the Senior Cycle students participate in an 8-day tasting intervention period.

## Fruit & Veg Repeat Tasting - Phase 1 – 16 days



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Day 1

5

9

13



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Day 2

6

10

14



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Day 3

7

11

15



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Day 4

8

12

16

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