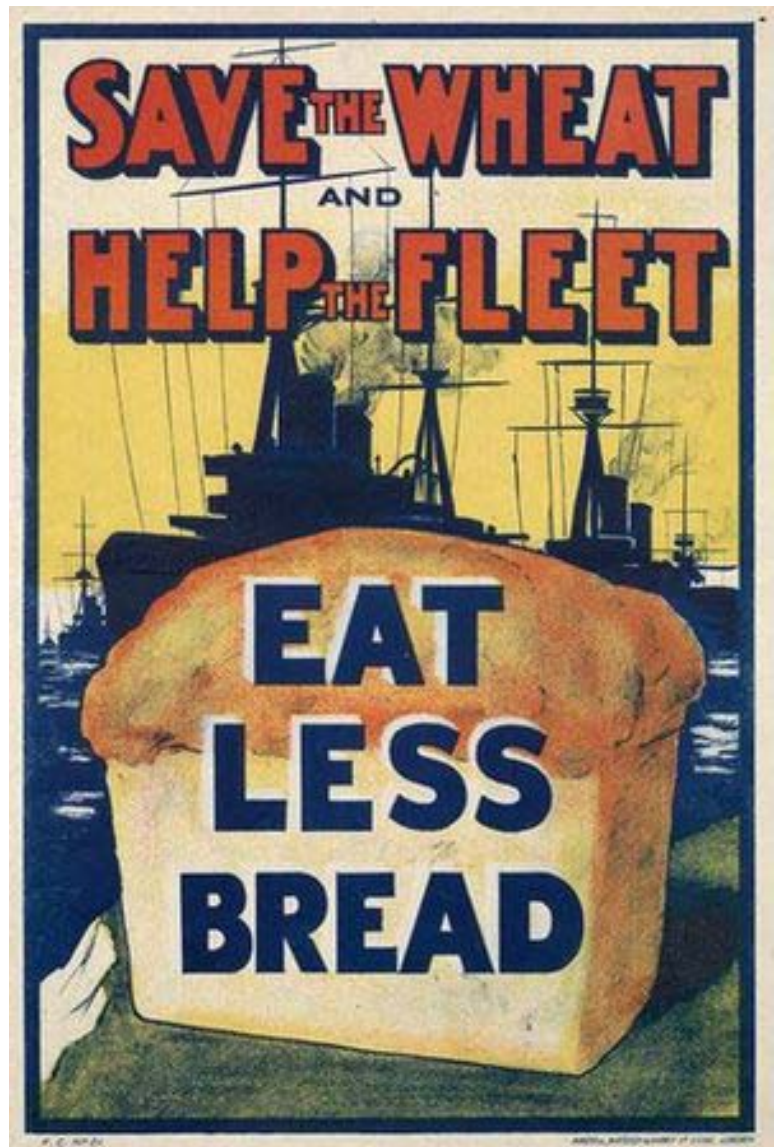


In line with its "business as usual" policy, the government was initially reluctant to try to control the food markets. It fought off efforts to try to introduce minimum prices in cereal production, though relenting in the area of controlling of essential imports (sugar, meat and grains). When it did introduce changes, they were only limited in their effect. In 1916, it became illegal to consume more than two courses whilst lunching in a public eating place or more than three for dinner; fines were introduced for members of the public found feeding the pigeons or stray animals.

In January 1917, Germany started using U-boats (submarines) in order to sink all ships headed to Britain in an attempt to starve Britain into peace terms under their unrestricted submarine warfare programme. One response to this threat was to introduce voluntary rationing in February 1917, a scheme said to have been endorsed by the king and queen themselves.

The 'Defence Of the Realm Act' (DORA) let the government take over land when it needed to. Rationing food and other measures taken were successful and most people obtained the food they needed. Any area that could grow food was converted to do so - gardens were turned into allotments, and chickens etc. were kept in back gardens. Potatoes, sugar and butchers' meat were the hardest goods to obtain.

Bread was subsidised from September that year; prompted by local authorities taking matters into their own hands, compulsory rationing was introduced in stages between December 1917 and February 1918, as Britain's supply of wheat stores decreased to just six weeks' worth. It is said to have in the most part benefited the health of the country, through the 'levelling of consumption of essential foodstuffs'. To assist with rationing, ration books were introduced on 15 July 1918 for butter, margarine, lard, meat, and sugar. During the war, average energy intake decreased only three percent, but protein intake six percent. Rationing was a clear indication to the British public that all was not well, but it did work.



WEEKLY RATIONS AT THE HEIGHT OF RATIONING

- Bacon and Ham - 4oz
- Cheese - 2-4-8oz
- Margarine - 4oz
- Butter - 2oz
- Milk - 2-3 pints
- Household milk - 1 packet every four weeks
- Sugar - 8oz
- Jam - 1lb every two months
- Tea - 2oz
- Eggs - 1 fresh each week, if possible usually every two
- Dried eggs - 1 packet every 4 weeks
- Sweets - 12oz every 4 weeks