

WORLD PUBLIC HEALTH NUTRITION ASSOCIATION

Charles Darwin House
12 Roger Street
London WC1N 2JU
United Kingdom

October 26th, 2015

José Francisco Yunes Zorrila, Presidente Comisión de Hacienda y Crédito Público
Maki Esther Ortiz Dominguez, Presidente de la Comisión de Salud
Jorge Luis Lavalle Maury
Luis Armando Melgar Bravo
Armando Ríos Piter
Mely Romero Celis
Fernando Enrique Mayans Canabal

Honourable Senators of the United Mexican States,

The World Public Health Nutrition Association expresses its support to the National Institute of Public Health, other fellow civil society organizations and your position to:

- a) maintain the tax imposed in sugar sweetened beverages in Mexico;
- b) reject a 50% reduction in the tax on all sweetened beverages with less than 5g of added sugar in 100ml; and
- c) support an increase in the tax to 20%.

Several international health organizations including the World Health Organization, the World Obesity Federation, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Mexican Academy of Medicine have urged countries to adopt novel policies to revert the current global obesity epidemic, including taxing ultra-processed food products and sweetened beverages, in addition to other regulatory measures.

Evidence of the negative effects of sweetened beverages consumption on obesity and diabetes and of the current and projected positive impact of taxing ultra-processed foods and beverages have been repeatedly presented by experts all over the world. Taxing sugar sweetened beverages not only decreases consumption, but helps to position those foods as unhealthy, improve health and nutrition literacy and increase awareness of healthy eating worldwide.

In Mexico 7 out of 10 adults and 3 in every 10 children are overweight or obese. Mexico is also one of the leading countries for soda consumption (163 l per person per year), and it hosts two of the largest soda's bottlers and soft drink distributors in Latin America.

We commend the Mexican Government for their global leadership in addressing this public health problem by implementing the National Strategy to Prevent and Control Obesity and Diabetes which included a 1 peso per litre tax to sodas, and an 8% tax on snacks. As a result, from January to December 2014, consumption of soda sales decreased by approximately 6% whereas other non-taxed beverages (such as bottled water) increased by 4%.

Reducing the current tax on sugar-sweetened beverages in Mexico has no scientific foundation, nor is there a strong argument to rule out or decrease the tax in beverages with less than 5g sugar/100ml. The 5g/100ml is not an evidence-based decision, and it has no other aim than to protect sales of sugar-

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sweetened beverages for children as sold by Nestlé, Coca-Cola, Danone and PepsiCo. These drinks have around 5g of sugar per 100ml and come in 300ml presentations, amounting to 15g of sugar per drink. This level of consumption is close to the maximum daily amount recommended by WHO (10% of the total energy intake) so the ready availability of these sugary drinks is inappropriate in public health terms.

Mexico's leadership on taking fiscal policies to prevent obesity has been used as an example when advocating for a soda tax in other countries. On several occasions, including recently in the United Kingdom, academics and members of our Association have commended and used Mexico as a successful example of how public health interests can outweigh other interests, regardless of the significant influence food corporations have on governments.

The World Public Health Nutrition Association, in representing all our members who work to promote and protect healthy food systems and good nutrition, urge the Mexican Government and Honourable Senators to maintain the existing tax over sugar-sweetened beverages, and to increase it to 20% as a substantial contribution to promoting the health of Mexicans.

Sincerely,



Fabio Da Silva Gomes on behalf of the WPHNA executive committee
President
World Public Health Nutrition Association,