

Setting the scene internationally on food price policies, mostly taxes & subsidies

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National
SCIENCE
Challenges

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DIET 
Dietary Interventions:
Evidence & Translation



INFORMAS

Benchmarking food environments



Key Issues

- Poor diets: 9.6% of the global health loss in DALYs (GBD 2016 Study)
- Food insecurity (including populations in high-income countries)
- Sustainability issues with food production (greenhouse gases, water, nitrogen, land use etc)
- Lack of public trust in experts/governments on nutritional issues

SSB taxes – why do governments act?

- Global NCD crisis: Risk factor for obesity, diabetes & oral health
- No nutritional benefit from SSBs (and alternatives exist)
- Potentially can reduce plastic waste
- Tax revenue can be used for health and education

Systematic Review of SSB taxes

- Slides removed – as work by Teng et al still under review by a journal

SSB taxes: International developments

- 2013 WHO Global Action Plan on NCDs endorsed by WHA
- 2016 WHO recommends SSB taxes
 - Ending Childhood Obesity Report
 - Fiscal Policies for Diet and Prevention of NCD
- 30+ jurisdictions have introduced SSB taxes
- 8 / 36 OECD countries (Chile, Estonia, France, Ireland, Mexico, Norway, Portugal, UK)

Other jurisdictions with SSB taxes

Subnational jurisdictions within OECD countries:

- Catalonia (Spain)
- 7 USA cities: Philadelphia (at 33%), Berkeley, San Francisco, Oakland, Albany, Boulder, Seattle

South Pacific: Tonga (350%), Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Samoa, French Polynesia, Vanuatu

Enabling factors: SSB taxes

- Leading in the obesity epidemic (eg, Mexico, PICTs)
- Having a right-wing government (Hagenaars et al 2017, *Health Policy*)
- Clear goal that the tax is for health (Review: Wright et al 2017, *BMC Public Health*)
- Hypothecation eg, to health or education (Backholer & Vandevijvere 2017, *Public Health Nutr*)
- Tax design? (UK-style tiered levels)
- Evaluation framework (to identify impacts)

Criticisms of SSB taxes

- **Shifting to lower priced products:** some truth (but avoided with UK style tax; high tax levels)
- **Regressive impact** on low-income consumers – but some data suggest progressivity
- **Job losses** (spurious & bottled water sales may increase)
- **Political opportunity cost** (eg, carbon taxes more urgent?) Philadelphia vs ABA (\$US 9 m campaign)

SSB taxes: Public support

- Most surveys favour (& a citizen jury in Australia)
- But: Santa Fe, USA = 42% in citizen vote (lack of preparing the public?)
- But: Cook County, Illinois, USA – tax repealed after industry spent millions opposing (also a design flaw: tax used to address budget deficit)

Other food taxes

- 3 OECD countries:
 - Mexico: junk food tax (evidence: [Taillie et al 2017, *Prev Med*])
 - Hungary: selected high sugar & salt products
 - Norway: generalised sugar tax (also a SSB one)
- Modelling evidence generally favourable eg, [Cobiac et al 2017, *PLoS Med*]
- Discontinued in: Denmark & Finland (poor design of SF tax in Denmark)

Food subsidies: Evidence

- Some favourable modelling evidence, especially when combined with taxes eg, [Cobiac et al 2017, *PLoS Med*]
- Pregnant or postnatal women: 10-20% increased intake of targeted foods/nutrients (14 studies, mainly USA) [Black et al 2012, *BMC PH*]
- Meta-analysis: 10% decrease in price (ie, subsidy) increased consumption of healthful foods by 12%, 22 studies [Afshin et al 2017 *PLoS ONE*]

Summary

- SSB taxes – are effective in reducing SSB consumption & are increasingly popular internationally
- Other food taxes – some evidence but less popular
- Food subsidies – work but limited experience outside targeted populations