



Sugar Tax or The Dutch Sugar Covenant?



Michael AB Naafs*

Dutch Internist Endocrinologist, Health Consultant at Naafs, Netherlands

***Corresponding author:** Michael AB Naafs, Dutch Internist Endocrinologist, Health Consultant at Naafs, Netherlands

Submission: 📅 November 26, 2018; **Published:** 📅 November 30, 2018

Abstract

The Dutch government presented this week the Nationale Preventieakkoord which is actually the first sugar covenant in the world. This non-committal covenant will further worsen the obesity, type 2 diabetes and tooth decay epidemic in the Netherlands until 2040.

Introduction

Sugar tax on sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) has been worldwide implemented by governments as they are of no nutritional value and are highly detrimental for overall health, fueling the global obesity, diabetes type 2 and tooth decay epidemics [1]. In 2018, sugar tax related tax revenue or similar measures have been approved in nearly thirty countries including; Mexico, Ecuador, Chile, Brazil, Colombia, Egypt, India, Ireland, Thailand, Barbados, Tonga, Mauritius, the Pacific Islands, Norway, Hungary, France, Finland, Romania, Ireland, Portugal, the Philippines, The United Kingdom, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, the UAE, Brunei, Estonia and Belgium) [1].

As highlighted by the WHO in 2016, taxing sugary drinks to at least a 20% increase in the retail price would result in proportional reductions in consumption of such products, according to the "Fiscal Policies for Diet and Prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases" report and can lower sugar consumption and reduce obesity, type 2 diabetes and tooth decay [2]. SSB taxation introduction has mostly led to a significant reduction in SSB purchase with a potentially significant impact on human health and well-being. The health outcomes will heavily depend on its implementation by industry [3].

Sugary soft drinks are not the only source of bad sugars. More than half of the food purchased in the U.K. household is ultra-processed foods, which are cheap, energy-dense, high in unhealthy types of fat, refined starches, free sugars and salt and poor sources of protein, dietary fibers and micronutrients [4]. Nevertheless, sweetened drinks pose a greater risk of type 2 diabetes than most other foods containing fructose [5]. It is therefore remarkable the Dutch government presented a sugar covenant instead of a sugar tax this week [6]. Both sugar tax and the Dutch sugar covenant will be discussed here. Sugar taxes; Redondo et al reviewed 17 studies performed between 2011-2017 that analyzed the impact of fiscal regulatory measures on the consumption, purchases or sales of

SSBs [7]. Of the 17 studies, 5 (29.4%) evaluated the impact of a tax on SSBs in naturalistic experiments by county or city in the United States and in Mexico. Findings indicated that purchases or sales of SSBs decreased significantly with taxation amounts of 5% (Berkely, CA) and 10% (Mexico). One study found no effect on SSBs in 2 states that enacted a 5.5% tax on soda's Twelve (70.6%) studies were based on virtual or experimental conditions evaluating either behavior or sales (6 studies;50%) or behavioral intent (6 studies; 50%), resulting in a decrease in either purchasing behavior or sales or intent behavior with heterogeneity to the tax rate. The authors concluded taxation significantly influences planned purchase and increases the probability of the purchase of healthy beverages. SSB taxes have the potential to reduce calorie and sugar intake, but further research is needed to evaluate effects on diet quality [4].

The Dutch Covenant

This week, the Dutch government presented the National Preventieakkoord, the result of a long process of consultation about prevention and health issues of 50 societal, health care and business platforms, including the soft drink industry [8] Most important measures regarding overweight and obesity are that sport clubs, schools, hospitals, big companies and soft drink industries declared their willingness to provide healthier foods and beverages with less sugars, starting at 2020 and 2025, respectively [8]. The goal is less than 38% Dutch overweight citizen in 2040. At this moment 49% of the Dutch are overweight.

In a leaked report, however, experts from the National Institute for Prevention and Public Health (RIVM) showed by counting the Nationale Preventieakkoord overweight will rise to 60% in 2040 [6]. To my knowledge this sugar covenant is the first of a kind to avoid sugar taxes, because there is no majority for a sugar tax in the Dutch Parliament. Supporters of a sugar tax blame the free market and lobbyists of the soft drink industry [6].

Conclusion

This non-committal sugar covenant surely will worsen the obesity, type2 diabetes and tooth decay epidemic in the Netherlands further.

References

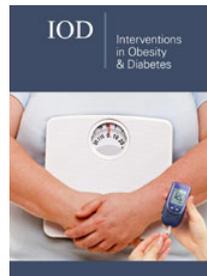
1. Bedi R (2018) The sugar tax: A leadership issue for the dental profession and an opportunity to demonstrate that oral health is part of general health. *Contemp Clin Dent* 9(2): 149-150.
2. WHO (2016) WHO urges global action to curtail consumption and health impacts of sugary drinks.
3. Briggs AD, Mytton OT, Kehlbacher A, Ahmed, Mike P, et al. (2017) Health impact assessment of the U.K. soft drink industry levy: A comparative risk assessment modelling study. *Lancet Public Health* 2(1): 15-22.
4. Naafs MA (2018) Ultra-processed foods, gut health, autoimmunity and diets. *CPQ Medicine* 2(2): 1-12.
5. <https://www.bmj.com/content/363/bmj.k4644/related>
6. Kamsma M RIVM, Measures to tackle unhealthy lifestyle are insufficient.
7. Redondo M, Hernandez A I, Lumbreras B (2018) The impact of the tax on sweetened beverages: a systematic review. *Am J Clin Nutr* 108(3): 548-563.
8. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/gezondheid-en-preventie/nationaal-preventieakkoord>



Creative Commons Attribution 4.0
International License

For possible submissions Click Here

[Submit Article](#)



Intervention in Obesity & Diabetes

Benefits of Publishing with us

- High-level peer review and editorial services
- Freely accessible online immediately upon publication
- Authors retain the copyright to their work
- Licensing it under a Creative Commons license
- Visibility through different online platforms