Costs, equity, and acceptability of three policies to prevent obesity: A narrative review to support policy development

The review conducted as part of the STOP project investigated the cost and cost-effectiveness, equity, and acceptability of SSB taxation to add to the growing evidence on the effectiveness of taxing sugary drinks. SSB taxes are an important fiscal policy to promote healthy behaviours and reshape health-disruptive environments. The results of the study indicate that implementing SSB taxes is highly cost-effective and moderately favourable for health equity.

The acceptability of SSB tax implementation differed across different members of the population:

- Health professionals and civil society – strongly support SSB taxes
- Public – moderately support SSB taxes when the revenue generated is used towards positive, Health-promoting initiatives.
- Commercially interested actors (involved in sales of ultra-processed foods) – moderately oppose SSB taxes

Future research should investigate the association between price changes and consumers’ preferences and spending patterns. There is also a need for more high-quality research (i.e., peer-reviewed publication) that investigates the acceptability of SSB taxes.

In summary, the review concluded that SSB taxation is a viable and effective intervention to address obesogenic, health-disruptive environments.


About the STOP project: Led by Imperial College London and part of the Horizon 2020 programme, the Science and Technology in childhood Obesity Policy (STOP) is a four-year project which brings together 31 international research, advocacy, and governmental organisations from 16 countries to generate scientifically sound and policy-relevant evidence on the factors that have contributed to the spread of childhood obesity in European countries, and on the effects of alternative policy options available to address them. The project engages international partners from different policy-contexts in the United Kingdom, Italy, Estonia, Romania, Portugal, France, Belgium, Slovenia, Sweden, Croatia, Spain, Finland, Switzerland, with additional partners in New Zealand and the USA.