



23 February 2017

International Council of Beverages Associations' Response to *Health Affairs* Journal Article on the Mexico Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Tax

Today the International Council of Beverages Associations (ICBA) released the following statement in response to the Health Affairs article on the impact of Mexico's tax on sugar-sweetened beverages:

“ICBA supports meaningful policies to combat the global challenge of obesity that are based on sound science and the totality of the evidence. First and foremost, this study does not show any impact from the tax on the obesity rates in Mexico. In fact, data from Mexico's 2016 national health and nutrition survey suggests that the obesity rates have edged upward among adults in recent years. The bottom line is that there has been no demonstrated health benefit to Mexicans from taxation. Previous studies showed that in 2014, the tax led to a reduction of less than 6 calories per day out of a daily diet of more than 3000 calories, but had real-world economic implications for families who can least afford it.

Regrettably, the authors of this article are relying on theoretical models, which are estimations that do not align with actual tax receipts from the Mexican Secretariat for Finance and Public Credit (SHCP)¹. The official government data shows increases in sugar-sweetened beverage sales through 2016, as opposed to the projected decrease suggested by the authors.

Fiscal interventions have not proven to be successful in terms of obesity reduction. What actually works is real, meaningful, coordinated efforts by government, industry, and healthcare and consumer stakeholders in local markets around the world working together to implement evidence-based solutions.

ICBA and our members have, for example:

- Developed and made available more beverage options with fewer calories, including more reduced, low- and no-calorie product offerings.

¹ The Mexican government's tax receipt data can be reviewed at:
http://finanzaspublicas.hacienda.gob.mx/es/Finanzas_Publicas/Estadisticas_Oportunas_de_Finanzas_Publicas.

- Reformulated existing beverages to significantly reduce calories.
- Further developed smaller portion size options.
- Supported the removal of soft drinks from primary schools.
- Developed and successfully implemented the 2008 ICBA Guidelines on Marketing to Children, which were updated and expanded in 2015.
- Developed ICBA Guidelines on Nutrition Labeling to aid the global non-alcoholic beverage industry in providing meaningful and understandable fact-based nutrition information.
- Created the 2013 ICBA Guidelines for the Composition, Labelling, and Responsible Marketing of Energy Drinks to help ensure such products are not marketed to children.
- Supported physical activity and nutrition programs, and research and partnerships that advance nutrition science.”

Such widespread, voluntary industry actions have reduced caloric availability and help shape consumer choice much more so than discriminatory beverage taxes. ICBA welcomes the opportunity to work with stakeholders on productive solutions to the obesity challenge, and we are committed to being part of the solution.”

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The International Council of Beverages Associations (ICBA) is an international nongovernmental organization established in 1995 that represents the interests of the worldwide non-alcoholic beverage industry. The members of ICBA include national and regional beverage associations, as well as international beverage companies that operate in more than 200 countries and territories and produce, distribute, and sell a variety of non-alcoholic sparkling and still beverages, including soft drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks, bottled waters, flavored and/or enhanced waters, ready-to-drink teas and coffees, 100% fruit or vegetable juices, nectars and juice drinks, and dairy-based beverages. For media inquiries please contact ICBA’s media line at +1 (202) 463-6739 or icba@icba-net.org.