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### Sugar taxes – do they influence consumption and incidence of obesity?

Several studies have associated excessive sugar consumption with weight gain and obesity. Across Europe, daily consumption of total sugars ranges between 15% and 21% of total energy intake among adults and from 16% to 26% in children. Added sugar intakes range from 7% to 11% in adults and 11% to 17% among children. The major dietary sources of these added sugars are Sugar-Sweetened Beverages (SSBs) and sweet products. Hence, many countries and/or states implemented or are in the process of introducing taxes on SSBs. The logic of a sugar tax is that product prices would increase which in turn, would deter purchases and hence lower consumption. This reduced intake of calories is believed to positively impact on the incidence of obesity. However, assessing the impact of food taxes on public health is very complex. The economic rationale of sugar taxes is that illnesses associated with obesity add unnecessary costs to a government's budget for national health systems. But, do the sugar taxes work? Sugar taxes have altered patterns in both the food industry as well as consumer behaviours – not always in a positive direction. Consumers have resisted price increases, crossed borders for purchases, and/or consumed non-taxed high sugar-containing products. On the other hand, there are a limited number of papers documenting decreased purchases of SSBs after a tax was imposed. However, this reduction in sales is not being reflected in the rising obesity epidemic. There is very little evidence, if any, that SSB taxes have a positive impact on weight management in overweight and obese individuals. Public health policies, consumer education, reformulation and portion size adjustments are all key actions to promote healthier eating patterns.

### Biography

Aisling Aherne graduated with both a BSc in Nutrition and PhD in Nutritional Biochemistry from University College Cork (UCC). Her career has involved working in nutrition research, science communication, and clinical nutrition support. In April 2016, Aisling joined Kerry Group as Nutrition Science Manager for Europe & Russia. Her role involves working collaboratively with Kerry RD&A, Marketing, Regulatory, and Commercial teams on projects and opportunities. Aisling is also involved in nutrition research projects internally and also externally with various third level research institutes. In February 2018, Aisling presented on a Kerry Health and Nutrition Institute webinar entitled "Sugar Reduction: formulating for Success".

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