

Junk food tax



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Junk Food tax is defined as “taxing less nutritional value food such as sugary pop while food with high nutritional value will not be taxed.” (Rupert Taylor, 2009). Junk Food is generally consumed by people with a wide range of ages, a majority of children, adults or even elderly love consuming junk food. It is likely to say that junk food contains quite a lot of fat and food additives which have low nutritional value and bad to our health. Research appears to show (Dr. Michael Booth, 2009) that the problem of obesity in children is not because of the lack of exercise by them, but the consumption of high calories junk food. Times have moved on, more people are having fat-related diseases. Some of the countries have set up law of junk food tax, Denmark is the first country to do so. Junk food tax may lower the chances of having those diseases by some of the citizens. This essay examines why junk food tax seems to be beneficial to citizens

To begin with, taxing unhealthy junk food can highly decrease the consumption of it by citizens. According to the New England Journal of Medicine (Kelly D. Brownell, Ph. D., 2009), the author suggested that through taxing of sugary food, the decrease in consumption could be more than 10% which indicates that citizens may tend to buy less unhealthy junk food after taxation. The reason for this phenomenon is that the change in price of food will directly affect our preference of consumption. When the price of junk food becomes higher, people will tend to buy less. If people buy less junk food, there should be lower chance for them to over consume it. Therefore, junk food tax can lower the consumption of unhealthy beverages by citizens.

Some would argue that tax may not be able to change the long-term behaviors of some of the people, as they may treat the behaviors as habits.

(Mark Bittman, 2011) However, as mentioned above, the price of a product will probably lower the incentive of consumption of people. At the same time, junk food tax may prevent parents from buying junk food to their children since they are young. If people have lower chances to consume junk food when they are young, the risks for them to become addicted to junk food will probably be lower. Hence junk food taxation could be set up to relieve junk food overconsumption.

Secondly, junk food tax may address overconsumption and reduce the risks of having fat-related diseases such as obesity and high blood pressure. Based on the research article (Julie Steenhuisen, 2010), the research team of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill which is led by Kiyah Duffey suggested that taxing junk food is an appropriate way to fight against obesity. It may be true that the decrease in the risks of having obesity is one of the consequences of junk food tax. As mentioned above, taxing junk food may lower the consumption of it by some people and hence it can prevent the overconsumption of unhealthy food and the accumulation of fat content in human bodies. With lower fat content and cholesterol level in blood, the chance of having fat-related diseases may drop. The energy intake by some people may also be reduced; hence weight loss will be aided. As a result, government should legislate the junk food tax in order to improve the health of citizens.

An article seems to indicate that junk food tax is not an effective way to hinder the trend of obesity. (Donald B. Ardell, Ph. D., 2003). It is due to the self-responsibilities of customers. The author mentioned that it may be true for customers to buy less junk food after taxation, but the taxation could

never be ended as customers are too rely on the taxation to reduce the consumption of junk food and it is not correcting the eating habits of citizens. However, it seems to me that taxation is recommended for the control of junk food consumption, it may be the first step the government could do. There should be other following works after taxation. Taxation is the stepping stone to slow down obesity and other fat-related diseases. After taxation, the government could correct citizens' eating habits through education and hence to improve the health conditions of some of the citizens.

Thirdly, taxation on junk food may urge the food manufacturer to produce healthier food. According to the article by an international commentator on health science and social policy issues (Lois Rogers), Prof. Sir Nicholas Wald, director of the Wolfson Institute of Preventive Medicine claimed that taxing the ingredients of manufactured food may urge the company to reformulate their products so as to pay fewer tax. By taxing junk food or the food additives added, the manufacturers may have higher incentive to produce healthier products so as to minimize the lost in taxation and to attract more customers to purchase their goods. In the long term, more companies may adapt to reformulating their products and it will enhance an optimum competition among different junk food companies. The beneficiary will be the whole society. Thus, the government could introduce junk food tax to encourage the manufactures to produce some healthier food for consumers to purchase.

Lastly, taxation on junk food may generally lower the health burden of the government and the government can make use of the tax to subsidize

healthy food and some health programs for citizens. According to the article (Mark Bitten, 2011), he suggested that government can try to tax unhealthy food such as soda, French fries and chips and make a good use of the tax revenue. The government may use the tax revenue to subsidize healthy vegetables and fruits, people may have higher incentive to purchase the healthy food with a lower and reasonable price. Moreover, government may introduce some health programs to citizens such as providing sports training courses and subsidizing schools for better health education. Hence, the tax revenue and resources can be better allocated to the citizens. However, the government may need to spend time on calculating the tax rates method and what food to subsidize so as to provide a more complete and faultless subsidizing program. To conclude, the government can provide more health programs and to encourage citizens to purchase more healthy food through taxation.

There are different opinions on the set up of junk food tax. Some think that it is an appropriate way to do such that taxation on junk food may lower the consumption of unhealthy beverages, reduce the risks of unhealthiness, increase the amount of healthy food sold in the market and lower financial burden of government so as to subsidize fruits and vegetables. In contrast, some people oppose junk food tax. They think that junk food tax cannot change the long-term behaviors of some of the people and it will lower the self-responsibility of health by some of the citizens.

It can be concluded that, taxation on junk food is advantageous to both of the citizens and government. The practice could encourage some of the citizens to adapt to a healthier lifestyle by balance eating habits and take part in

more health programs. In addition to this, citizens become healthier are beneficial to the working force in the society. With less long-term health diseases, employers could work efficiently with higher productivity. All in all, junk food tax is a blessing to us.