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EuroHealthNet: “The “Fat Tax” introduced by the Danish Government can contribute to a healthier food environment”

On 1st October 2011, the Danish government has turned its face against a storm of criticism with the adoption of the tax of saturated fat in a product despite widespread opposition from Denmark’s food industry. For EuroHealthNet, the position taken by the Danish Government represents a major step in the health promotion, with the goal to increase the average life expectancy of Danes.

The tax applies to products containing more than 2.3% saturated fat. This includes meats, including chicken and pork, cheese, butter, edible vegetable oil, margarine and other foods such as potato-based snacks. The tax, imposed on domestic and imported food, is levied on the weight of saturated fat contained in these foods, and charged per kg of saturated fat. The food sector has hit back, questioning that rationale and arguing that consumers will travel to neighbouring countries to buy the affected foods anyway.

Food considered as being unhealthy, including crisps, soft drinks and chocolate bars, are already subject to the fat tax in Hungary. The new law, introduced on 11 July 2011, is aimed at "*improving the health of the nation*". Initially called 'the hamburger tax', the measure was dubbed 'crisps tax' or 'fat tax' after the Hungarian government decided that it would not affect fast food restaurants.

For EuroHealthNet, Hungarian legislation and the position taken by the Danish Government represent a major step in health promotion. However, EuroHealthNet stresses that higher taxed unhealthy food should be complemented with measures to make healthy products cheaper. For Caroline Costongs, EuroHealthNet Deputy Director, “*a factor such as income has considerable impacts on health and the*

“fat tax” should not increase difficulties for those people who are already struggling to pay for their daily meals”.

The promotion of life-long lasting healthy eating habits is unfortunately compromised by the current financial crisis. Member States have suggested a cut of 29 % of the EU School Fruit Scheme that targets access to healthier foods to 5 million children in 32.000 schools - and a minority of Member States currently blocks negotiations related to the EU food aid programme for the most vulnerable. Such decisions are contrary to the promotion of a healthy food environment and to the guarantee of healthy and affordable food for everybody.

- For more information about the Danish position, click [here](#).
- Through its work carried out in the frame of the Policy Action Group on Nutrition and Physical Activity (PAG NPA), EuroHealthNet works in order to counteract obesity in EU Member States. To access EuroHealthNet report *“Focusing on obesity through a health equity lens”* is available [here](#).

You can read about EuroHealthNet work at main site www.eurohealthnet.eu, and on EuroHealthNet project websites:

- Health Equity: www.health-inequalities.eu
- GRADIENT: www.health-gradient.eu
- SPREAD: www.spread2050.ning.com
- The Equity Channel: www.equitychannel.net

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