Curbing global sugar consumption: Effective food policy actions to help promote healthy diets & tackle obesity

This brief provides a guide to available policies that can assist countries in reducing the amount of sugar consumed at a population level to meet the World Health Organisation’s sugar guidelines. It uses the NOURISHING Framework to show that a comprehensive set of policies is necessary to reduce sugar consumption and that action is needed across three policy domains:

1. Food environment.
2. Food system.
3. Behaviour change communication.

The brief provides a set of questions to provide a starting point for dialogue and research:

- Is supporting farmers and labourers involved in sugar production one way of reducing consumption?
- Could the provision of clean water, fruits and vegetables encourage a large-scale substitution away from sugary foods and drinks?
- What is the role of reformulation?
- Is facilitating the adoption of non-caloric sweeteners by soft drink manufacturers part of the solution?
- Is there a role for policy on sugar production, trade and distribution?

WCRF then developed the following recommendations:

- Learn from the policy actions highlighted here and the experience of the experts who have developed and implemented them. Governments should prioritise not only taking more action, but more effective action to curb sugar consumption.
- Initiate dialogue with stakeholders in the sugar supply chain. This could identify what ‘upstream’ actions can be taken to reduce the supply and demand for sugar.
- Avoid looking at sugar in isolation. Policies to reduce sugar intake should be implemented in the context of broader dietary improvements.

World Cancer Research Fund calls to take a comprehensive approach to reducing sugar consumption. Action is needed across all three policy domains outlined in our NOURISHING framework: food environment, food system and behaviour change communication.