

Good Questions 2

This GQ column collects brief and sharply pointed questions relating to WN's mission. The idea is to stimulate discussion and research about the issues raised. The first edition of GQ appeared in *World Nutrition* (8)1, and can be accessed at

<https://worldnutritionjournal.org/index.php/wn/article/view/20/24>

Many nutritionists are concerned about the rapid increases in overweight throughout the world. The evidence of the close associations between overweight and morbidity of various types is beyond question. What to do about it is a matter for active debate.

Much attention has been given to the use of tax policies, such as taxing sugary soft drinks. There are interesting ideas about the potential of revenue neutral policies based on taxing unhealthy foods to subsidize healthy foods.

That sounds good, but there is a need to take account of different conditions in different places, and the ways in which such policies impact different groups of people. *The Economist* (2017) raises interesting points, such as the regressive nature of such taxes. They describe studies that show that food taxes and subsidies can widen both health and fiscal inequalities. Taxes can hurt lower income people more, while subsidies can help higher income people more.

What should be done to ensure that food taxes and subsidies are fair to all? That's a good question. Increase the taxes on fine wine and subsidize cheap wine? That one is not so good.

References

The Economist. 2017. "Fat is a Fiscal-policy Issue. *The Economist*. October 5.
<https://www.economist.com/news/finance-and-economics/21730033-study-suggests-lower-income-families-end-up-paying-more-their-food-taxing-fat>