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RESEARCH TENDER CALL



TENDER INFORMATION DOCUMENT

Project Reference No.: 02A-2020

Project Title:

“Fiscal and pricing policies related to food and non-alcoholic drinks: a review of the evidence.”

1. Objective/Knowledge Gap


The overall aim of this research is to support policy makers on the island of Ireland (IOI) by providing them with data on the effectiveness of fiscal and pricing policies in improving access to healthy dietary choices and in creating incentives for behaviours associated with improved health outcomes.

Objectives:

- Identify international evidence of approaches and effectiveness (including failures) of fiscal and pricing policies related to food and non-alcoholic drinks, to improve diet and prevent non communicable disease
- Review the evidence in relation to dietary intake, health outcomes, health inequalities; and the equitability of the tax burden
- Identify the fiscal and pricing policies with most practical relevance for implementation on the IOI with reference to political sustainability and food policy

2. Background

Obesity is a major public health issue on the IOI. Both Departments of Health in Northern Ireland (NI) and the Republic of Ireland (ROI) have established cross departmental obesity

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implementation plans using a range of policy approaches. The Republic of Ireland (ROI) plan includes recommendations in relation to fiscal food policy on sugar sweetened beverages (SSBs) (1). While there is no specific reference to fiscal policy measures in the Northern Ireland (NI) plan (2), a United Kingdom (UK)-wide levy on SSBs was introduced in 2018, and Public Health England (PHE) have published a review of fiscal policy measures that can be used as a guide by policy makers to improve population health (3).


Fiscal and pricing policies to improve diets are key population-based intervention options to address obesity and health. (4). Such policies have been introduced in several countries in recent years with a range of successes (5). Health-related taxes have been recommended by the WHO to reduce purchases of SSBs (6) and this taxation strategy was introduced in the UK and the ROI in 2018 (7, 8). Data shows that the UK levy has encouraged a wave of reformulation by the beverage industry with at least 50% of manufacturers reducing the sugar content of their products (9). The question is whether there is scope to introduce further fiscal and pricing policies to enhance the effect of taxation on dietary intakes and health outcomes.

As the evidence of the potential benefits of such policies to public health has increased, the development of fiscal and pricing policies to improve diets and prevent non-communicable diseases has begun to gain momentum (10). By 2017, the Nourishing framework had recorded the introduction of such policies in at least 29 jurisdictions: 14 national policies had been introduced in low or middle-income countries and 15 national or more local policies had been introduced in high-income countries (11).

Growing evidence shows that appropriately designed fiscal and pricing policies, when implemented with other policy actions, have considerable potential for promoting healthier diets (5). These can improve weight outcomes and other diet-related risk factors as well as contributing to the prevention of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and to the reduction of the NCD health and economic burden (5).

3. Approach

The proposal will involve a review of the international evidence on the effectiveness and otherwise of fiscal and pricing policies in relation to food and non-alcoholic drinks, in

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improving diet and preventing NCDs. The evidence of the effectiveness of fiscal and pricing policies in relation to dietary intakes, health outcomes, health inequalities, equitability of tax burden and political sustainability should be presented. The review should address the evidence for combinations of taxes and subsidies as a mechanism to reduce potential substitution with unhealthy foods.

The research should identify those fiscal and pricing policies that are relevant and practical on the island of Ireland.

4. Technical Specification

(a) Scope of research

The review should look at fiscal and pricing policies that are relevant and practical within tax systems on IOI. The research shouldn't solely focus on the fiscal policy of SSBs levies already introduced in the UK and ROI. It can include non-alcoholic drinks not impacted by this legislation.

The scope of work should take into consideration existing reviews of the evidence and utilise databases such as the one developed by the Nourishing framework and FAO data (11). We would like/encourage the successful applicants to identify systematic reviews as a first point of reference before undertaking their own reviews of the wider literature.


The approach should be collaborative across a number of relevant disciplines including public health, business studies, food policy, nutrition and economics.

The research should be embedded in a comprehensive understanding of food policy and the food environment on the island of Ireland is required.

It should be noted that **safefood** is not an active participant in the project and sole responsibility lies with the successful tenderer.

(b) Literature review

A full and thorough review of the literature on fiscal and pricing policy in relation to food and non-alcoholic drinks, to improve diets, reduce obesity and prevent non communicable disease; this should be more than a narrative review. It should include peer reviewed publications and also a comprehensive search of the grey literature including government and other organisation reports, and conference proceedings etc. This latter process

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can/should be informed by the formal review which identifies countries and administrations of interest. The review should collect literature from modelling studies as well as empirical and qualitative evidence. Detail must be provided in regard to how the literature review will be structured and completed along with quality assurance mechanisms e.g. review by more than one researcher.

(c) Outline of proposed data sources

For this study, a large number of different data sources will be required. The researcher must enumerate the sources they intend to use and demonstrate access and experience in the use of the proposed data sources, as well as the relevant permissions to do so.

(d) Analysis


A full and detailed methodology must be provided on how the data sources are going to be utilised, analysed and interpreted to meet the objectives of the project.

This research should analyse the effectiveness of fiscal and pricing policies on food and non-alcoholic drinks in promoting healthy diets, improving health outcomes and health inequalities; and consider the equitability and political sustainability of the tax burden imposed. Analysis should also include identification of fiscal and pricing policies with most practical relevance for implementation on the Island of Ireland.

Consideration should be given to the complexity of food policy measures including international evidence of price elasticity, health and substitution effects of fiscal policy, and barriers to fiscal policy: this may include evidence of impact on jobs, businesses, those on a low income, tax avoidance and political support. The role of civil society and health professionals in terms of monitoring and implementation of fiscal policy must also be considered e.g. the role of Bloomberg Philanthropies in supporting public health NGOs advocate and campaign for policy implementation as in the case of the Mexico SSB levy.

(e) Data handling and Reporting

- The contractor will submit to **safefood**, on a six-monthly basis, an interim report containing details of the progress for each deliverable of the project.
- The contractor is responsible for collating all results and a final report will be submitted to **safefood** on completion of the study.

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- All forms, documentation and electronic files must be retained by the contractor until further notice for **safefood** in case of issues arising after the completion of the research.

(f) Quality assurance

- To ensure transparency and reproducibility, all data sources used in the research must be specified, and all data used must be explicitly specified and justified.
- **safefood** may visit the contractors during the course of the research to assess how the work is being carried out.

5. Proposed Activities/Deliverables


- Final report to include a literature review of international evidence of approaches and effectiveness of fiscal and pricing policies in relation to food and non-alcoholic drinks, in improving diet and preventing NCDs; a review of the international evidence in relation to dietary intakes, health outcomes, health inequalities, equitability of tax burden and political sustainability; and consideration of fiscal and pricing policies with most practical relevance for implementation on the Island of Ireland. A series of implications and recommendations for policy options in the two jurisdictions on the IOI and 'ideas' for cross border working and consistency across administrations.
- Submission on a 6-monthly basis of an interim report on progress.
- Analysis of the final dataset, collation of the results and drafting of a final report to be submitted to **safefood** at the end of the 12-month study period.

6. Evaluation of Tenders

Tender bids will be evaluated according to the quality of proposals and applicants using the following criteria:

Quality of the proposal:

- ✓ Anticipated deliverables;

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- ✓ Research method and facilities;
- ✓ Value for money;
- ✓ Potential for application;
- ✓ Work plan, including the overall timeframe.

Quality of Applicants:

- ✓ Experience in subject area;
- ✓ Quality Assurance and Quality Control measures in place.

7. Duration of Project

Estimated duration of the project: Total of 12 months. A detailed timescale of research should be submitted by the applicant.


8. Tender Application Forms and Guidelines

The Tender Application Form and associated Guidelines can be downloaded from www.safefood.net. They can also be obtained by emailing research@safefood.net, quoting the project reference number **02A-2020**.

The closing date for receipt of applications by **safefood** is no later than **4pm on 23rd October 2020**.

References

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4. World Health Organisation. Global action plan for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases 2013-2020. Switzerland; 2013.
5. World Health Organisation. Fiscal policies for diet and the prevention of noncommunicable diseases - Technical meeting report, 5-6 May 2015, Geneva, Switzerland 2016.
6. World Health Organisation. Ending childhood obesity. Geneva, Switzerland; 2016.

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9. Rathbone Greenbank Investments. The UK sugar tax: one year on 2019 [Available from: <https://www.rathbonegreenbank.com/insight/uk-sugar-tax-one-year>].
10. Thow AM, Downs SM, Mayes C, Trevena H, Waqanivalu T, Cawley J. Fiscal policy to improve diets and prevent noncommunicable diseases: from recommendations to action. Bull World Health Organ. 2018;96(3):201-10.
11. World Cancer Research Fund International. NOURISHING framework, London 2017 [Available from: <https://www.wcrf.org/int/policy/nourishing/our-policy-framework-promote-healthy-diets-reduce-obesity>].