

29 August 2024

**Hon. Teodoro Herbosa**  
Secretary  
Department of Health

Dear Secretary Herbosa,

Greetings from the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (ECCP)!

The Chamber, and its Food and Beverage Committee, welcomes this opportunity to submit inputs and comments on the Department of Health's Draft Administrative Order entitled "**National Policy on the Promotion of Healthy Diets**" under the Call for Public Consultation enclosed in Department Circular No. 2024-0296.

While we appreciate and support the progress to be brought about by this Draft Administrative Order, the Chamber, on behalf of its Food and Beverage Committee Members, finds it imperative to respectfully present and clarify our technical comments on the proposed specific guidelines outlined in the document to further supplement its development and future implementation.

- A) With reference to the **proposed Price and Fiscal Measures (lines 217-222), particularly on the pursuit of measures in the form of taxes and subsidies as well as Regulations on Marketing (lines 223-227).**

One of the "hard" policy measures that has been extensively debated in many countries globally, is the use of fiscal measures that tax foods which include nutrients with a potentially detrimental effect on health, such as sugar, salt and fat. Scientific findings on the effectiveness of such measures in improving consumer health remain largely inconclusive, with varying opinions on their impact among related literature.

Moreover, whether or not 1) fiscal measures and 2) regulatory marketing mechanisms do benefit the shared thrust against the triple burden of malnutrition, they cannot single-handedly address concerns over consumer health in the long term. Therefore, the debate on consumer health should not be limited to the application or not of an excise duty and marketing restrictions on specific food items.

- B) The Chamber aligns with the **proposition to Implement Social and Behavioral Change Communication (SBCC) campaigns (lines 230-236) insofar as supporting the creation of a holistic, multi-sectoral approach, which focuses on consumer education and information.**

We understand the significance of reaching target populations and improving individual knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to the attainment of a healthy diet. The influence of these actions can result in a change in consumer attitudes on diet, physical exercise and health, and the availability of

healthier products in the market, to effectively address obesity as well as diet- and lifestyle-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

Further to this, we reiterate the urgency to adopt a multi-sectoral approach, which entails including all relevant government entities, private sector stakeholders, and health groups. In this light, we likewise call on the proactive implementation of actions that will promote consumer health.

- C) Lastly, we respectfully request that you **conduct a thorough impact analysis and assessment per the implementation mechanisms (lines 329-334) enclosed in the document to sufficiently inform decision-making and, more importantly, endeavour for the inclusion of the concerned industry stakeholders in the further development of this Draft Administrative Order and similar dialogues moving forward.**

In conclusion, we hope and trust that your good Office will review, consider, and apply the technical bases that we have shared on: **1) reconsidering the proposition to impose price and fiscal measures on specific food items; 2) highlighting the need for a multi-sectoral approach in tackling information dissemination to improve consumer education; and 3) call for a thorough impact analysis.**

We thank you in advance for the kind consideration and we look forward to a fruitful collaboration.



**Helen Grace Baisa**

Chairperson, ECCP Food and Beverage Committee

29 August 2024

**Hon. Teodoro Herbosa**

Secretary

Department of Health

Dear Secretary Herbosa,

The European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (ECCP), along with its Food and Beverage Committee, appreciates the opportunity to provide inputs on the Department of Health's Draft Administrative Order entitled "National Policy on the Promotion of Healthy Diets," as outlined in Department Circular No. 2024-0296.

The ECCP supports the Department of Health's commitment to promoting healthy diets across the Philippines and is keen to collaborate to ensure that the food and beverage industry is aligned with and well-equipped to contribute to this important national objective.

In this regard, we respectfully submit our comments and recommendations to enhance the policy's development and future implementation.

**Evidence-Based Strategies**

We strongly endorse the use of evidence-based strategies in the proposed policy. However, we hope that the scientific evidence guiding these strategies remains unbiased and does not disproportionately affect the food manufacturing sector, as suggested in the draft text. The food manufacturing sector is guided by rigorous scientific research in its daily operations, including product development, reformulation, and enhancement. We believe that this scientific knowledge should be fully considered alongside other evidence when determining regulatory strategies for promoting healthier diets.

**Support for Food Product Reformulation**

We emphasize the importance of fostering an environment that supports the reformulation of food products. Rather than relying exclusively on punitive measures, such as taxes or marketing restrictions, we recommend policies that incentivize the industry to improve the nutritional quality of their offerings. Providing the necessary tools and motivation for innovation can encourage active participation in promoting healthier diets.

**Whole-of-Society Collaboration and Partnership**

We believe in the importance of participatory governance and whole-of-society collaboration. However, we note that the private sector and industry stakeholders are currently excluded from key discussions in the draft. We advocate for the inclusion of these stakeholders in policymaking and implementation processes, recognizing their critical role in supporting the initiatives outlined in this policy. Exclusion risks overlooking valuable expertise and resources that could contribute significantly to promoting healthier diets.

**Emphasis on Consumer Education**

We underscore the need for a comprehensive approach to nutrition policy, with a strong focus on consumer education. Public health strategies should prioritize equipping individuals with the

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## Specific Concerns and Recommendations

Regarding the proposed Price and Fiscal Measures (lines 217-222), particularly the use of taxes, subsidies, and the Regulations on Marketing (lines 223-227), we note that the imposition of taxes on foods containing nutrients considered potentially harmful, such as sugar, salt, and fat, has been widely debated across countries. However, current scientific evidence does not conclusively demonstrate that such "sin" taxes lead to a significant and lasting reduction in obesity rates and associated non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The effectiveness of these fiscal measures remains uncertain, with diverse opinions found in the literature.

Moreover, whether or not 1) fiscal measures and 2) regulatory marketing mechanisms do benefit the shared thrust against the triple burden of malnutrition, they cannot single-handedly address concerns over consumer health in the long term. A more effective strategy would be a comprehensive, sustainable, and multi-faceted approach that involves both public and private sectors and addresses the multiple factors contributing to obesity and NCDs.

Additionally, we support the **implementation of Social and Behavioral Change Communication (SBCC)** campaigns (lines 230-236) as part of a holistic, multi-sectoral approach that promotes consumer education. Targeting these initiatives at key populations and improving individual knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors can encourage healthier dietary practices and overall well-being. Such efforts could also enhance the availability of healthier products in the market, helping to address obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

Furthermore, we respectfully request that a **thorough impact analysis and assessment of the implementation mechanisms** (lines 329-334) be conducted to inform decision-making more effectively. We also advocate for the inclusion of industry stakeholders in the ongoing development of this Draft Administrative Order and in similar future dialogues. The Philippine food and beverage industry plays a crucial role in the country's economic growth and can significantly contribute to achieving the policy's objectives.

## Conclusion and Further Engagement

The ECCP supports the DOH's overall direction in promoting healthier diets among Filipinos but expresses reservations regarding certain aspects of the current draft, particularly the exclusion of industry stakeholders from the policy process and some specific measures that require further discussion and impact analysis.

We trust that your good office will consider the following points: 1) ensuring that policy strategies are based on a balanced and inclusive body of evidence; 2) incentivizing food product reformulation to enhance nutritional quality; 3) reconsidering the imposition of price and fiscal measures on specific food items; 4) adopting a multi-sectoral approach to information dissemination and consumer education; and 5) conducting a thorough impact analysis before policy implementation.

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to a productive collaboration.

Sincerely,

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Helen Grace Baisa  
Chairperson, ECCP Food and Beverage Committee