

Taiwan mulls world's first junk food tax: report

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Taiwan is planning the world's first tax on junk food in a bid to encourage the public to eat healthily and cut obesity rates, a report said Monday.

The Bureau of Health Promotion is drafting a bill to levy the special [tax](#) on food deemed unhealthy, such as [sugary drinks](#), candy, cakes, fast food and alcohol, said the Apple Daily.

Revenue from the tax would finance groups promoting health awareness or subsidise the island's cash-strapped national health insurance programme, the report said.

The bill is expected to be submitted to the parliament for approval next year and could take effect around 2011, it said, citing the bureau's director Chiou Shu-ti.

Health officials contacted by AFP were not immediately available for comment.

Taiwan would be the first government in the world to impose junk food tax if the bill is passed, according to local health advocacy group John Tung Foundation.

"Overweight problems are getting worse in Taiwan with 25 to 30 percent of children obese, and it will cause more strain on our national health system," said Beryl Sheu, chief of the foundation's food nutrition

division.

"Hopefully the tax will dissuade people from eating junk food and snacks and prompt food companies to make healthier products," she said.

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