

SERIES OF SENATE HEARINGS ON TAX INITIATIVES OF THE DUTERTE ADMINISTRATION

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On 24 Aug. 2017, PAGASA was invited once more to the august chambers of the Phil. Senate to attend the extended hearings on proposed tax on Sugar-Sweetened Beverage (SSB). As usual, the room was filled and STC had to stand for two full hours before a medical practitioner vacated her seat after the doctors had attested to the varying but non-conclusive studies relating sugar intake from processed drinks to the incidence of diabetes in the different countries covered by various studies. The lawmakers were in a quandary as whether to tax SSB via the volume of these products per se or whether to do so based on the sugar-content of said products. Adopting the latter seems more appropriate when attributing the incidence of diabetes to the amount of sugar intake of a patient from SSBs. However, legislators are not sure whether our good people at the Food & Drugs Administration (FDA) are capable of releasing information about the level of sugar content of any given product as quickly as when a product is approved by them; so these products may be taxed accordingly soon as they are out in the market. Adopting the first approach is easier to implement but less fair given the direct proportion by which a product may lead to incidence of diabetes.

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