

## Essay

Walking into the grocery store, you find the Tasty Kakes on your left, Hershey bars on your right. You continue straight to the back, thinking maybe at the end of this calorie clutter lies a shelf of Healthy Choice meals and soy chips. The reality of modern American foods is that the vast majority of them are not considered healthy. Although a hypothetical tax on fatty foods may seem an ideal way to control obesity, the implications would make it both problematic and inconvenient. The first aspect to be considered is the assorted types of consumers buying caloric foods. Among the variety are the children, obese individuals, parents, athletes, not all of whom abuse high-calorie foods to the point where a tax would be necessary. When considering all the facets of the fat-tax, the outcome would be more damaging than helpful.

Suppose that the government agreed to the validity of the fat-tax and attempted to pass it as a law. The next step would be to come up with a set of criteria defining what makes a food unhealthy. The most logical way to go about assigning health values is to set calorie, fat, and sugar "boundaries" that a healthy product cannot surpass. Eventually, the lines would become blurred, and a fatty food whose nutritional values were just below the margin would pass as healthy enough to go untaxed. Were the government to extend the boundaries in order to include the foods that just barely passed as healthy, we would find the untaxed selection extremely narrow.

Although hypothetical, the fat-tax is comparable to the already existing tax on tobacco. The basis for the idea of taxing in either of these areas is the dismissal of both fatty foods and tobacco products as unnecessary. The tobacco tax, unfair as it may seem, is rising due to the current status of our economy. Though a more sensible approach would be to spread the tax out over a larger array of luxuries, our government has decided to concentrate it in one specific area. Those who argue for the tobacco tax claim that it will force people to cut back on what they refer to as an "unhealthy habit". Therefore, by principle it would only be just to add a tax to unhealthy foods as well. Seeing as the constantly rising tobacco tax is an unreasonable measure, however, the fat-tax would only add to the public's fury. The main factor that makes either of these taxes unjust is the targeting of specific consumers. A fat-tax is offensive towards those who buy caloric foods, just as the tobacco tax is a needless exploitation of tobacco consumers. While placing a fat-tax on unhealthy foods would seem to balance out the basis for the tobacco tax, it would only create more incentive for the government to target other groups of consumers. Rather than impel the government to make our expenses even more expensive, we can only hope that enjoying an overtaxed, pricey cigar won't be partnered with an even pricier bag of Cheetos.