

Unilever's Position on Sugar & Low-energy Sweeteners



Unilever

UNILEVER'S POSITION ON SUGAR AND LOW-ENERGY SWEETENERS

Key messages

- Consuming too much sugar can increase the risk of excessive energy intake.
- We support the position by organisations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) that energy intake from sugar, in particular 'free sugar', should be limited.
- We have taken action to offer products with less sugar and fewer calories and we are committed to reducing sugar and calories in our portfolio even further.
- Sugar plays an important role in our products for its sweetening properties and for technical reasons.
- We support the responsible use of low-energy sweeteners in line with regulations, as a way to replace sugars in foods and beverages.

Unilever's Position on Sugar

Sugar plays an important role in our products for its sweetening properties and for technical reasons, such as to provide texture, structure, colour and flavour to a product or to help preserve it.

We support the position that energy intake from sugar, in particular 'free sugar', should be limited in line with recommendations by a number of organisations, such as the World Health Organisation (WHO)¹. This is explicitly recognised in Unilever's nutrition goals.

We want to use sugar responsibly, while matching technical needs and consumer preferences.

We support collaborative programmes on sugar reduction initiated by governments and other stakeholders, as well as by industries. These can be voluntary or mandatory in nature, ideally meeting certain conditions, such as:

- Collaborative approach with industry involvement to set realistic criteria and timings
- Realistic targets based on sound scientific evidence and consensus, in line with WHO recommendations on maximum sugar intake, to have a clear impact on public health
- Creating a level playing field among all food industry players

- Taking into account technological limitations and the need to maintain consumers' product acceptance, e.g., role of sugar in the product, contribution of the product in the diet and standards of identity
- Lifting potential regulatory hurdles (e.g., the use of low-energy sweeteners)
- Supported by consumer awareness/education campaigns developed and led by government agencies or NGOs
- External monitoring systems put in place to track progress on targets and public health impact, led by government or independent agencies, preferably with a limited reporting burden to participants, e.g., by using already existing data systems

Unilever's Position on Low-Energy Sweeteners

We support the responsible use of low-energy sweeteners as a way to replace sugars (fully or partially) in foods and beverages, including for children, while maintaining consumer acceptance, and we advocate for their use as part of our sugar reduction toolkit.

Approved low-energy sweeteners are safe for use in foods and beverages consumed by the general population, including children, when consumed within the recommended levels.

The use of low-energy sweeteners in place of sugar mitigates the risks of excess energy intakes associated with sugar and dental caries.

Where possible, we focus on the use of nature-derived sweeteners to meet consumers' preference for ingredients from natural sources.

Our Actions

We want to work together with governments, NGOs and all food chain stakeholders to find the best solutions for a positive impact on public health, including limiting/reducing sugar. This could be via collaborative programmes, provided they meet the conditions mentioned above.

We have already taken actions to offer consumers products with less sugar and fewer calories. Our main focus is on beverages because that is where we can have the biggest impact on sugar reduction and therefore, public health. However, this does not mean that we limit our sugar reduction activities only to those products.



We are committed to reducing sugar and calories across our entire Unilever portfolio even further through our nutrition goals and products specific standards. We also limit sugar in the recipes developed with our products.

¹Guideline: Sugars intake for adults and children. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2015.

June 2025