

Soft drinks industry continues to deliver to create healthier food environments across the EU

Reaching 14.6% reduction of added sugars in soft drinks between 2015-2019

Brussels, 17 November 2020; Europe's soft drinks industry has reduced added sugars in its drinks across Europe by an average of 14.6% between 2015 and 2019.^[1]

UNESDA Soft Drinks Europe, representing soft drinks producers across the EU, is committed to creating healthier and more sustainable food environments. It is determined to support consumers in managing their intake of added sugars from soft drinks by ensuring that the healthier choice becomes the easy choice. The industry responded to the European Commission's call for a 10% reduction in added sugars by 2020 and recent research, by independent analysts GlobalData, confirms that it has met, and surpassed, the target ahead of time.

*"This reduction is proof that the soft drinks industry's **voluntary** efforts to reduce sugar across the EU are delivering **tangible** results,"* said UNESDA president and president Western Europe at The Coca-Cola Company, Tim Brett. *It demonstrates our sector's accelerated action in response to changing consumer preferences and the expectations of public health stakeholders."*

The 14.6% reduction in added sugars has been achieved through a comprehensive range of actions including changing recipes to reduce sugars while maintaining a taste with which consumers are happy; innovating to develop new products with different sweetness levels; increasing availability of small packs to support portion control and moderation; and nudging people toward more no- and low-sugar/calorie options through marketing investments. This latest sugar reduction comes on top of previous achievements and means that Europe's soft drinks industry has now reduced added sugars by an average of 26% since 2000.

UNESDA is a founding member of the EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health and has undertaken a series of voluntary commitments over the past 15 years to help address unhealthy diets as a risk factor for non-communicable diseases. These have been complemented by numerous national pledges to support EU member states in their action plans to create healthier food environments. These pledges are the result of stakeholder engagement at a national level and set targets based on local baselines and expectations. They reflect the conclusions of the 2016 Dutch EU Presidency which highlighted that sugar reduction is a gradual process and needs to take account of different dietary habits and preferences across the EU.

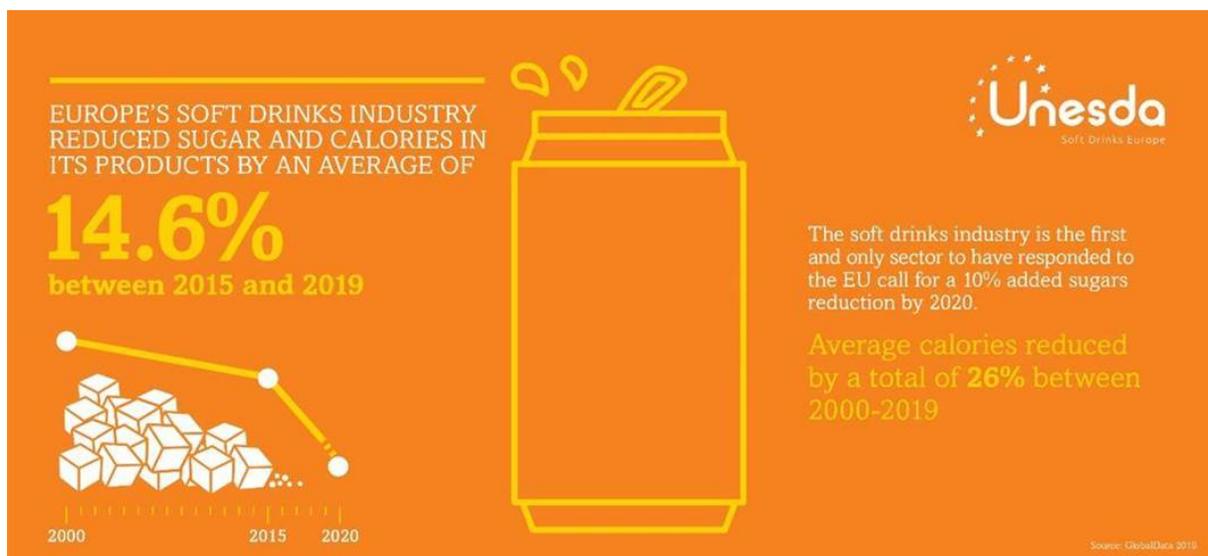
"Our sector's progress in reducing sugar and calorie reduction has been enabled by the openness of stakeholders to engage through the EU Platform," concluded Tim Brett. *"We believe that the EU Code of Conduct for responsible business and marketing practices announced in the EU Farm to Fork strategy offers an opportunity to continue this dialogue with all actors, including Member States. As an industry we are committed to maintaining our efforts through a range of voluntary actions to ensure that the healthier choice becomes the easy choice."*

The path towards sugar reduction through reformulation comes with multiple challenges from a technological and consumer acceptance perspective and these become greater the more the reductions continue.

^[1] GlobalData research across 7 markets – Belgium, France, Germany, Spain, Sweden, Romania, UK - representing 62% of the EU market and extrapolated to create an aggregate figure.

While the soft drinks sector has reduced the average sugar content in its products, and the WHO's research^[2] shows that frequency of consumption among school-aged children has declined across all age groups over the past 16 years, recent data shows that rates of overweight and obesity have not reduced. This demonstrates the complexity of the issue and the need for a holistic approach with all food and drink sectors committing to actions that support healthier food environments.

In addition to ongoing sugar and calorie reduction, Europe's soft drinks sector has also made far-reaching commitments to behave responsibly in the marketplace including no advertising to children under 12; no sales of any soft drinks in EU primary schools and only no- and low-calorie drinks offered for sale in EU secondary schools.



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About UNESDA

Established in 1958 UNESDA Soft Drinks Europe is a Brussels-based association representing the European soft drinks industry. Its membership includes both companies and national associations from across Europe producing drinks including still drinks, squashes, carbonates, powders, iced teas, iced coffees, syrups, energy drinks and sports drinks. It is signatory to the EU Transparency Register (No: 25498952296-56). www.unesda.eu

^[2] <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/Life-stages/child-and-adolescent-health/health-behaviour-in-school-aged-children-hbhc>