



# International Sugar Organization

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Article from Iberá

**Soft drinks industry commits to 10% sugar reduction  
by 2020, EU Food Policy  
7 February 2017**

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The Executive Director would like to call your attention to the article below from Iberá.

**Soft drinks industry commits to 10% sugar reduction by 2020, EU Food Policy,  
7/2/2017**

The European soft drinks association, UNESDA, announced on Tuesday that its members will reduce the sugar content of their soft drinks by 10% from 2015 to 2020.

UNESDA says this is in line with the 10% reduction target requested by the European Commission and member states and that it is the first food industry sector to agree such a target.

The sector, which includes brands such as Coca-Cola, Pepsi and Orangina, will achieve the target by reformulation and by encouraging consumers to switch from sugarsweetened drinks to low or no calorie alternatives.

Companies will use their promotional and advertising spends to encourage consumers to buy lower sugar or no sugar products and will also reduce portion sizes to achieve the target.

The 10% target is aggregated and takes into account existing and new local industry pledges on sugar reduction. The approach is flexible so a company might make a big sugar reduction on a product in one member state but not in another.

UNESDA president Stanilas de Gramont, who heads Suntory Beverage and Food Europe, said the commitment was partly driven by consumer demand for lower or no sugar drinks.

"There is a clear evolution of consumer preferences towards lower sugar products," he told EU Food Policy. Two-thirds of new products launched on the market were low calorie products, he stressed.

The brand leaders are already strongly promoting low or no calorie products but one barrier is the steady stream of scientific studies published which question the safety of artificial sweeteners or whether they help with weight management.

Mr de Gramont said that low calorie drinks could account for up to 40% of sales in some EU member states but in Lithuania they only accounted for 1%.

"The commitment is flexible to meet consumer needs," he said.

### Audited report

UNESDA will publish an audited report by an independent body in 2021 to demonstrate the commitment has been achieved. However, it will not explain what individual companies have done in different EU markets.

"It will be by a validated organisation," Mr de Gramont said, adding that the commitment was "very, very bold" and that he hoped other food sectors would follow.

Soft drinks made up about 3% of total calories so while the industry could "play its part" others would also need to act. Overall, the target would be met by different approaches by different companies in different markets.

"We don't want to ruin our industry," he said.

The soft drinks industry says it cut the level of added sugar in soft drinks by 12% from 2000 to 2015, so it sees this new commitment as almost a tripling of the previous rate of reduction.

The commitment is a response to the EU's call for reformulation and sugar reduction across the food industry.

It supports the EU Roadmap for Action on Food Product Improvement and the 10% overall target in the Annex on Voluntary Reduction of Added Sugars agreed by the Commission and member states.

UNESDA represents about 80% of the soft drinks industry and some of its members market "own label" drinks as well as big brands.

Mr de Gramont's own company, Suntory, announced in November that it would reduce sugar in Lucozade, Ribena and Orangina by about 50% in Ireland and the UK.

This will mean that none of its products have more than 4.5g of total sugar per 100ml and so will fall below the threshold for the new soft drinks taxes in both member states.

The supermarket chain, Tesco, has cut the amount of sugar in its "own brand" soft drinks including Tesco Cola.

Coca Cola contains 10.6g of sugar per 100ml while Pepsi Cola contains about 11g.

The pressure on the food and drink industry to reduce sugar seems to intensify each week.

The WHO has been calling for sugar taxes and now the European Food Safety Authority is expected to issue an Opinion on the harmful effects of added sugar.

Ireland and the UK are poised to introduce sugar taxes next year.