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Philippine lawmakers advance a proposal to raise taxes on alcopops

Supporters say the sweetened drinks appeal to young consumers, making higher levies a public health measure that could fund prevention programs

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Lawmakers in the Philippines on Wednesday, November 25, advanced a proposal to impose higher taxes on alcopops, a category of sweetened alcoholic drinks designed to be easy to consume and often marketed in flavors that can appeal to younger drinkers.

Supporters of the measure say the goal is to protect the health and welfare of young people, who they argue are more likely to be drawn to these beverages because of their sweetness and relatively low alcohol content. In the debate around the proposal, backers have said a tax increase could discourage underage and youth drinking and help reduce alcohol-related accidents and illness.

The proposal is also being framed as a fiscal measure. Its supporters say the added revenue could strengthen government funding for programs aimed at preventing alcohol abuse and expanding public health education. That would place the measure within a broader pattern of using alcohol taxes not only to raise money but also to influence consumption.

The plan remains under study in Congress, where lawmakers are expected to examine both its public health case and its possible economic effects before any final decision is made. According to the discussion described by supporters, that review is expected to

include the potential impact on the alcohol industry and on consumers, including whether higher taxes would lead to higher retail prices.

For beverage companies, the proposal could matter well beyond the youth drinking debate. If enacted, higher taxes on ready-to-drink alcoholic products could raise costs for manufacturers and importers operating in the Philippines and could prompt adjustments in pricing, product positioning and sales strategy. The effect would depend on the final structure of the measure and how broadly lawmakers define alcopops for tax purposes.

The issue has become more prominent as policymakers in many markets pay closer attention to products that blur the line between soft drinks and traditional alcohol offerings. Alcopops have often drawn regulatory scrutiny because their flavor profiles, packaging and lower alcohol strength can make them more approachable to first-time drinkers than beer, wine or spirits served in more traditional forms.

No final tax rate or implementation date was announced in the information available on November 25. The proposal is still being evaluated, and lawmakers are expected to weigh the health benefits cited by supporters against concerns that higher alcohol taxes could affect business activity and household spending.