



THE TAXING ISSUE OF LOOKING BEYOND MEAT INTO A PLANT-BASED FUTURE

Beyond Meat's founder champions a tax on meat to promote plant-based diets and tackle climate change.

By Katie Morris

Beyond Meat is the world's biggest plant-based meat company – having deals with McDonald's and Yum! Brands, parent company to Taco Bell, KFC and Pizza Hut.

Negative Impact

“I strongly believe this will have a negative impact on the industry and with consumers,” says foodservice consultant Arlene Spiegel, president of Arlene Spiegel & Associates, Inc. in New York, US, in reaction to Brown's interview.

“The industry needs to find a more positive way to bring attention to the climate change issue than by taxing meat products. It is too judgmental and will require an enormous effort to educate the public in order to make the connection between meat consumption and climate change,” says Spiegel.

Spiegel likens the potential reaction of a meat tax to that of New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg's imposed tax on sugary sodas that caused uproar amongst New Yorkers despite the messaging suggesting the tax was being imposed to bring attention to the “health consequences” of drinking the beverages.

Walk the Talk

There are other ways to promote plant-based diets that don't impact consumers' pockets, Spiegel urges. “Feature more plant-based dishes and ingredients on their menus; include the names of the producers and farmers who supply the establishment; commit dollars and time to education in schools and communities; walk the talk,” she says.

If consumers are making the choice to eat more plant-based products, then a Pigouvian tax could be seen as a natural progression in the promotion of meat-free food alternatives. However, the transition to the implementation of such a tax is not casualty-free.

“The whole notion of a Pigouvian tax, which is to tax negative things that are high in externalities, I think is an interesting one. Overall that type of thing does appeal to me,” Brown told Talking Business broadcaster Aaron Heslehurst.

Whether a Pigouvian tax on meat products will be implemented is to be confirmed, but Spiegel warns that a taxation on meat products will eventually be passed on to the consumer. “While it might bring awareness, I doubt it will change behaviour,” she warns. **FE&S**