

Southeast Asia has a weight problem

Starting next year, Singapore will treat packaged **sugary** drinks such as Coca-Cola the way that other countries treat cigarettes. Advertisements will be banned, and a label **attesting** to a beverage's unhealthiness will be **mandatory**. The goal is to reduce the high rate of sugar consumption and associated health problems — such as diabetes and heart disease — that are now **plaguing** Southeast Asia.

Sugary 甜的; 含糖的

attest 证明; 证实

mandatory 强制的; 命令的

plague 折磨; 纠缠

It wasn't so long ago that much of Asia was associated with undernourishment. Thanks to a half-century of economic development and income growth, that's no longer the case. Although hunger remains an issue in some areas, overall, Asians now have access to more and better food than ever — a fact reflected in rising life expectancies across the continent.

But increased access to food isn't all good news. As incomes have risen, Asia's eaters have tended to shift away from traditional **starch**-based diets and toward food rich in fat, protein, dairy, and sugar, much of it packaged and processed. Calories that might've once been worked off in rural fields now accumulate on the hips and **bellies** of Asia's middle classes.

starch 淀粉

belly 肚子; 鼓起

The health effects associated with this shift, combined with other unhealthy nutritional trends, have been severe. Southeast Asia now accounts for about 20% of all diabetics globally. Over the past two decades, countries in the region have seen the world's largest increases in premature deaths related to **cardiovascular** disease.

cardiovascular 心血管的

Faced with such an epidemic, Singapore's plan to ban advertising and mandate labeling certainly makes sense. If Singapore thinks a bit more ambitiously, it might provide a model for other emerging and newly developed countries needing to slim down.