

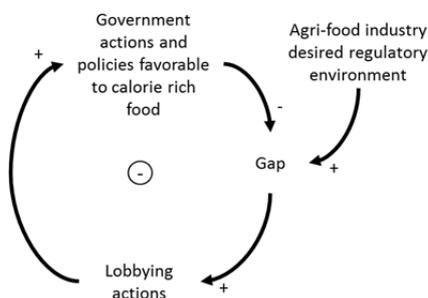
## Invisible balancing loops

Our model of obesity in Mexico was essentially based on one news article. It is a starting point that we can expand on by reading further. As we sought to explain the growth in the number of people overweight, **our model was made up of reinforcing loops**. Sometimes, **balancing loops remain hidden** until they reveal themselves when they react to an external event.

Two recent initiatives taken by the Mexican government to address the complex problem of obesity reveal balancing behaviors. By taking a closer look at these initiatives we can **expand our understanding** of the systemic structure.

**Action 1: The national agreement on nutritional health.** One initiative was a national agreement for nutritional health that was reached in January 2010 between a number of ministerial departments and other public authorities, non-governmental organizations, unions, the media and the agri-food sector. The aim of the agreement was to slow the growth of overweight and obesity prevalence in adults and children. The finished agreement included a range of 117 actions including the promotion of more physical activity in schools and in workplaces and the accessibility, availability and consumption of water. In our model, these actions would have a negative effect on the variable “government actions and policies favorable to calorie rich food”.

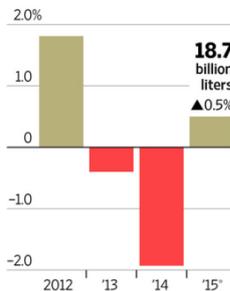
According to the UN Special Rapporteur, the agri-food industry, represented by Conmexico lobbied to ensure that some important “tools to influence consumer behavior, including the raising of taxes on soda drinks and foods rich in trans fats or in sugars, were not made part of the national agreement”.



The lobbying actions by the food industry can be understood through a **balancing loop**. The agri-food industry seeks to maintain a favorable environment for the sale and consumption of its products. Any change that threatens the status quo will be resisted or weakened through lobbying actions. We can add this balancing loop to our model (see suggested changes in additional materials).

### Soda Pop

Change from a year earlier in the volume of carbonated soft drinks sold in Mexico.



\*Forecast Source: Canadian THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

**Action 2: The sugar tax.** In October 2013, the Mexican parliament adopted a one peso tax per liter on sugary drinks. The tax came into effect in January 2014. In the first year the tax and accompanying marketing campaign did reduce consumption of sugary drinks. In our model we can show the tax as lowering the gap between the cost of healthy food and processed food.

Recent data shows that soft drink sales are now increasing. While they are not at pre-tax levels, the increase in sales teaches us a little more about the systemic structure. One explanation is that the soft drink industry engaged in heavy lobbying to criticize the tax and advertising to counter its negative effects on the image of junk food. We can show these reactions as balancing loops in our model (see additional materials).

## References

“Fizzing with rage”, <http://www.economist.com/news/business/21588088-once-omnipotent-industry-fights-what-may-be-losing-battle-fizzing-rage>

“Soda Sales in Mexico Rise Despite Tax”, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/soda-sales-in-mexico-rise-despite-tax-1462267808>