



A heritage of quality

Breakfast chief culprit in Kenya's diabetes crisis, states Broadway Bakery

Kenya is suffering a diabetes crisis that is set to paralyse the country's health system in coming years and is being driven by excessive sugar consumption in breakfasts, according to Broadway Bakery Ltd. Director Mr Bimal Shah, who has today called on food manufacturers to reduce the sugar content in their products.

Currently, Kenyans consume some 60 grams of sugar a day compared with Tanzanians who consume a typical 23 grams a day. In India, citizens typically consume just 5 grams of sugar a day, while the Chinese average just over 15 grams a day.

Addressing the African Food Manufacturing and Safety Summit at the Kenya School of Monetary Studies in Nairobi, Mr Shah laid out a looming crisis for the healthcare system and for Kenyans in diseases that are being driven by poor food choices, triggering debilitating and permanent diseases in adults as young as 25 years old.

"Figures indicate that already more than 5 per cent of 25 year old Kenyans are developing diabetes, which is a lifelong condition that causes kidney failure, loss of limbs, comas and a range of debilitating and life threatening complications, from a disease that is triggered profoundly by excessive sugar consumption," said Mr Shah.

"As diets shift towards manufactured and processed foods, we have a responsibility as an industry to start addressing the excessive sugar content in some of our food products and beverages," he said.

Presenting some of the key causes of sugar overload, Mr Shah cited figures from the World Health Organisation showing that the majority of sugar is consumed at breakfast as sugar added to tea, but also in some breads that Kenyans love that contain more sugar than cakes, biscuits and cereals.

On the basis that more than 49.5 grams of sugar is consumed at breakfast time, compared with the WHO guidelines for 50 grams of sugar a day, Broadways Bakery has taken a long-term decision to manufacture and deliver bread that is sugar-light. Broadway bread contains sugar at the rate of only 2.5 per cent of flour weight, compared with 7 to 8 per cent for other leading brands.

Broadway Bakery has also now launched a nationwide #BeSugarSmart campaign to raise sugar awareness across Kenya.

WHO data shows that the country has a sweeter tooth than almost all of Africa with Kenyans consuming twice as much sugar as Tanzanians and more than all other African nationals except South Africans and the citizens of Swaziland. “The consequences are feeding straight through to surging diabetes and other lifestyles diseases amongst our youth, as well as the older population,” said Mr Shah.

Kenya now has a higher prevalence of diabetes than Africa as a whole, with the country’s mounting diabetes crisis placing acute pressure on hospital services and on particular facilities such as kidney dialysis. Kenyans’ excessive sugar consumption has also brought a surge in obesity with almost one fifth of pre-school Kenyans now obese and almost a third of Kenyans overweight.

“The chief culprit in this excessive sugar overload are high sugar breakfasts,” said Mr Shah. “As a result, a major life decision for any modern Kenyan is what they eat for breakfast with most starch-based ‘breakfast foods’ laden with sugar, a lot of which is hidden. Make the wrong choice and you or your child could end up with a breakfast high in sugar and health problems, including type 2 diabetes, obesity and high blood pressure,” he said.

In launching the #BeSugarSmart campaign, Broadway Bakery is seeking to educate Kenyans on being aware of the sugar content of what they eat and in checking food labels to establish the sugar content.

“Sugar is not a bad thing at all, if consumed in moderation. But where Kenyans have shifted to excessively high sugar diets, the price is being paid by many in hospitalisation and long term health issues. The key is to be vigilant and check labels where applicable, as well as inquire from manufacturers if there is uncertainty,” said Mr Devan Shah, Business Development Executive at Broadway Bakery.

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