

# *Ecuador Mulls Fast Food Tax to Combat Obesity*

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Quito, September 15 (NNN-RHC) -- Ecuador's President Rafael Correa is taking on U.S.-owned fast food chains in a bid to combat the escalating obesity problem in the country.

Although the politician did not outline the severity of the penalties, or who would be covered by the law, his target was clear. "We're talking about these big chains where meat is cooked in pans of oil used over and over, which is a threat to public health," said Correa in his local radio address.

"We are moving past poverty-related problems since the country is progressing a lot, and moving on to problems of affluence. People are dying from bad food, not a lack of food. People will stop eating so many McDonald's and Burger King hamburgers with the tax.

The country of 15 million has just under 30 McDonald's outlets and 15 Burger Kings, mostly in urban areas. Ecuador suffers from what the World Bank, in its recent report, called the "double burden" of malnutrition among both the rural and poor population, and an emerging middle class that is gorging itself on fatty foods, like it is living in times of scarcity.

Correa has also introduced a new traffic light system -- labeling foods as either green and healthy, yellow, or red, and potentially harmful.

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