Reviewer's report

**Title:** Assessment of dietary intake among pregnant women in a rural area of western China

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 22 January 2009

**Reviewer:** Inge Huybrechts

**Reviewer's report:**

Assessment of dietary intake among pregnant women in a rural area of western China

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
   Yes the question is well defined

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
   It is unclear whether the FFQ they used is appropriate for estimating nutrient intakes.

3. Are the data sound?
   I tried to find the validation paper about the FFQ to check the structure of the FFQ and the validity, but I didn't have access to it yet. Soundness of the data depends partly on this FFQ.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
   Yes

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   Some comparisons with other surveys using 24-h dietary recalls is delicate!

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
   Not enough

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
   Yes

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
   Yes

9. Is the writing acceptable?
   Yes the writing is acceptable.
Revisions

# Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)

It could be useful to refer to the Barker theory in the introduction. (Barker 2002): Fetal origins of adult disease: strength of effects and biological basis.

It would be nice to see the dietary reference intake in the figure 2 so that it is clear how low or high they are in comparison with the reference.

# Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

For the minor revisions (suggestion for textual changes) I would like to refer to the pdf file in annex:
- page 4 line 7: nutrients in pregnancy have been reported
- page 4 line 18: be detrimental
- page 5 line 14: weeks
- page 5 line 17: as at
- page 6 line 4: prior to

# Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1) I couldn’t check the validation paper of the FFQ, but I was wondering how the FFQ was build as only 68 food groups is little for analyzing so many different nutrients? Did you include the foods that have high concentrations in all those nutrients in the FFQ and did you also include all the foods that are frequently consumed in that particular population? Please explain in the methods section how you did the linking with the food composition tables and which composition tables did you use? In the discussion you should comment on possible limitations of the food composition data used and on the limitations of the FFQ (only 68 food groups is not too much for analyzing so many nutrients).

2) In the methods section you should more clearly specify whether the subjects derived from the control group only of the trial.

3) Be careful with the comparison between the FFQ data and the data from 24-h dietary recalls, as the differences found might be due to differences in methods. You should clearly describe the limitations of those comparisons between those two methods!

4) It would be good to report the degree of under or overreporting of your FFQ that was found in your validation study!

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable
**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests