Reviewer's report

Title: Studying the health outcomes of fiscal interventions (taxes and subsidies) on food and beverages in countries of different income classifications; a systematic review

Version: 1 Date: 13 February 2015

Reviewer: Fan Fan

Reviewer's report:

I. Major Compulsory Revisions

NA

II. Minor Essential Revisions

1. Risk of bias: The manuscript did not address the issue of risk of bias, which is recommended in Cochrane handbook for systematic reviews of intervention. As the systematic review is based on fiscal interventions, rather than randomized trials, the issue might be different. However, it would be beneficial to address risk of bias/quality of included studies in the manuscript.

2. It would be beneficial to add some backgrounds of previous studies. What do we know from previous studies? What are the potential effects of FI on food and beverages?

3. Limitations: The limitations of the study should be clearly stated. The eighth paragraph of discussion mentioned some of the limitations of the study, but not all of them.

4. Criteria for inclusion, types of participants. Delete “.” after the title “Types of participants”.

5. Criteria for inclusion, types of interventions. There is description for subsidy included in studies. Add similar descriptions for taxes.

6. Results, effect on anthropometry, peer-reviewed literature, first paragraph. Clarify/reword the sentence “One study found no cross-sectional association between state-level taxes (in the range 0-8%) and BW, although a non-significant trend towards a lower increase in obesity prevalence among states with a tax was observed”. What is “a lower increase”?

7. Results, effect on anthropometry, peer-reviewed literature, third paragraph. Add “,” after “a LMI country”. Or change the first sentence into “Asfaw assessed the direct effects of subsidies on four food items ranging from 42%-62% in Egypt (a LMI country) on BW using historical data on price and consumption”.

8. Results, effect on anthropometry, peer-reviewed literature. Either bold both “peer-reviewed literature” and “grey literature”, or unbold the two titles.

9. Results, effects on the pregnancy-related outcomes. Add “(PRO)” after the
title.
10. Results, effects on the pregnancy-related outcomes. Specify what country FSP is done (US).
11. Results, effects on anthropometry and PROs. Add short description of the food subsidies mentioned in the Brazil paper. What kind of subsidies? What conditions?
12. Results, effects on consumption, PROs and nutritional status. Specify what small effect on calorie consumption? Increase or decrease?
15. Table 2. Need to be fixed. There’s missing information on the first page. Some part of the table is not shown.

III. Discretionary Revisions

1. Abstract, Methods. Could add, “The systematic review was conducted followed Cochrane protocols”.
2. Introduction, first paragraph of introduction. Change to sentence from “The WHO has considered economic tools, including taxes and subsidies, to improve the affordability of healthier food products and to discourage the consumption of less healthy options” to “The WHO has considered economic tools, including taxes and subsidies, to discourage the consumption of less healthy options and to improve the affordability of healthier food products”.
3. There is inconsistency on the use of “behaviour” and “behavior”. For example, Introduction, second paragraph.
4. Results. There is inconsistency on the use of “effect” and “effects”. For example, some of the titles use “effect” (i.e. effect on consumption), some of the titles use “effects” (i.e. effect on the pregnancy-related outcomes).
5. Results, effects on the pregnancy-related outcome, second paragraph. Change “However, it doesn’t increase the probability...” into “it didn’t increase the probability”, to be consistent with the tense of previous sentence.
6. Conclusion: Though the first paragraph of discussion concludes the findings, it would be beneficial to have a clear conclusion with implication for practice and research.

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.