



## Diet-related NCDs in China: more needs to be done

Zhang and Gong in their Comment recently published in *The Lancet Public Health*<sup>1</sup> seem very positive about the latest release of the recommendations for Healthy China Actions by the State Council, noting that it paints a road map to Healthy China 2030. Although the outlined actions represent an important step towards a healthier China, their impact might be small, particularly on diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as obesity.

International public health organisations and experts are calling for a shift from changing individuals to changing the environment for the promotion of healthy eating.<sup>2,3</sup> Evidence for the effectiveness of environmental and upstream interventions, such as regulation, is rapidly accumulating.<sup>4,5</sup> However, China's main strategies for promoting healthy eating focus predominantly on educational or communication interventions targeted at the individual. Upstream interventions, particularly regulatory ones, have little presence within the current action plan.

A great body of research has shown that the link between health knowledge and health behaviour is not linear. Downstream interventions that focus on improving people's health awareness and knowledge have not had great effect in improving people's eating behaviours and reducing related NCDs in other countries.<sup>3</sup> Is China going to repeat this costly journey? The good news is policy interventions targeting public environments, such as schools and sport centres, have been recommended for the promotion of physical activity within the action plan. Can more be done for the promotion of healthy eating?

I declare no competing interests.

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- 1 Zhang C, Gong P. Healthy China: from words to actions. *Lancet Public Health* 2019; **4**: 438–39.
- 2 The Task Force on Fiscal Policy for Health. Health taxes to save lives: employing effective exercise taxes on tobacco, alcohol, and sugary beverages. New York, NY: Bloomberg Philanthropies, 2019.
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- 4 Cabrera Escobar MA, Veerman JL, Tollman SM, et al. Evidence that a tax on sugar sweetened beverages reduces the obesity rate: a meta-analysis. *BMC Public Health* 2013; **13**: 1072.
- 5 Scheelbeek PFD, Cornelsen L, Marteau TM, Smith RD. Potential impact on prevalence of obesity in the UK of a 20% price increase in high sugar snacks: modelling study. *BMJ* 2019; **366**: l4786