A systematic review of the effectiveness of taxes on non-alcoholic beverages and high-in-fat foods as a means to prevent obesity trends

As highlighted by many studies, the rising obesity prevalence is both an economic and public health burden. Socioeconomic, environmental, behavioural and genetic factors have all been linked to overweight and obesity. Evidence emerging from studies highlights that a price increase may avert the consumption of certain products and consequently improve diet quality, weight status and health outcomes in the long-term. This systematic review was undertaken to synthesise the results of original studies examining the possible impact of tax policies and price increase upon the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages and high-in-fat, salt and sugar foods. It generates evidence for policy makers and other key stakeholders.

The 55 studies included in this review demonstrated the effects of price and tax increase on the consumption both of sugar-sweetened beverages and high-in-fat, salt and sugar foods. The impacts over caloric intake and weight outcomes remain controversial with no significant effect observed on obesity-related outcomes. Overall, the review suggests that more research needs to be conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the use of economic policies in order to address the obesity epidemic.