PEER REVIEW HISTORY

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ARTICLE DETAILS

| TITLE (PROVISIONAL) | Benchmarking policy goals and actions for healthy food environments in Ethiopia to prevent malnutrition in all its forms using document analysis |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AUTHORS             | Trübswasser, Ursula; Candel, Jeroen; Genye, Tirsit; Bossuyt, Anne; Holdsworth, Michelle; Baye, Kaleab; Talsma, Elise |

VERSION 1 – REVIEW

| REVIEWER    | Ruben, Ruerd  |
|-------------|---------------|
|             | Wageningen Universiteit en Research |
| REVIEW RETURNED | 08-Dec-2021 |
| GENERAL COMMENTS | This article provides a systematic summary of available formal policy documents and is therefore limited to the ‘supply side’ of food policies in Ethiopia. Unfortunately, no information from the recent UNFSS Food System Dialogues has been used, and insights from real-time compliance are notably absent (although wide literature is available from IFPRI and others). The analytical framework used is rather formal and provides limited insights in the policy process (bargaining & power relationships behind specific policy goals) nor on the compliance. The merger of ‘quality’ and ‘safety’ in one single dimension is highly questionable. It would also be interesting to better understand how the dimensions are related to each other. The paper would certainly benefit from a more elaborated theoretical framework embedded in the (highly variable) local conditions of Ethiopia. The distinction into three stages is useful, but the analysis provides scarce new insights on the reasons for changing the paradigm and the implementation of policies in practice. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. |

| REVIEWER    | Mendes, Larissa  |
|-------------|-------------------|
|             | Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Nutrition |
| REVIEW RETURNED | 16-Jan-2022 |
| GENERAL COMMENTS | This is an interesting study that aims to assess how different food environment domains have been addressed in Ethiopian policy goals and actions over time and how they compare with global good practice benchmarks. The study was well conducted, however some points raised doubts for me. 1. I found the theoretical framework too simple, nowadays we already have more complex models for the food environment of low and middle income countries (LMICs), in this case I suggest explaining better how the relationships of the different food environments occur and what they would be different in Ethiopia. |
2. I believe it is also necessary to better explain the process of developing the theoretical framework.
3. The authors say they used other theoretical models besides FOODEPI to complement the idea, but do not cite which are these references.
4. In the methods I also suggest making it clearer that this was a study that used documentary analysis. Documentary analysis (document analysis) is a type of qualitative research in which documents are reviewed by the analyst to assess an appraisal theme.
5. One doubt I was left with in the analysis is that usually researchers evaluate documents involving the coding of content into subjects like how focus group or interview transcripts are investigated. Was that done in that study?
I believe, that by clarifying these simple questions the study will be very important to generate information about the food environment of the LMICs

REVIEWER
Mackay, Sally
The University of Auckland, Population Health
REVIEW RETURNED
25-Jan-2022

GENERAL COMMENTS
This is a very comprehensive paper that provides an important detailed overview of the food policy environment situation in Ethiopia using widely used benchmarks. While I am only suggesting minor revisions as the paper is well-written, I do consider that the manuscript is long and suggest the authors reduce the descriptive results section as some of the information in the table is repeated in the results.

Minor amendments:
Line 207 – close the bracket (World ….
Domains: A food safety and quality domain was added – had this been added in previous Food-EPI's, or did you add this yourself – if so, how did you develop the best practice statement?
Table 2: You mention a tax on water? I assume this is on bottled water to encourage people to access water from other sources.
Page 16, line 17 – change health to healthy (healthy, safe and sanitary)
Discussion – while there is a lot of detail on the food environment, you only touch lightly on trends in health status (malnutrition, obesity etc). Could you briefly comment on the trends in relation to changes in policy – e.g did the first policy actions on diet-related NCDs coincide with rising obesity rates? I realise that this information may not be available.
Line 619 For those of us who do not know a lot about the political climate in Ethiopia - can you add a sentence or two describing the political climate during this time, briefly expanding on the reference to conflict here.

REVIEWER
Ng, See-Hoe
Taylor's University
REVIEW RETURNED
03-Feb-2022

GENERAL COMMENTS
The manuscript provides a narrative summary of policy goals and actions related to the food environment by the Ethiopian government to address all forms of malnutrition. The use of ‘policy’ component of Food-EPI as the theoretical framework provides a good entry point for policy investigation. Also, the authors explored
additional policy domain (e.g. food quality and safety) that is relevant to the local context. All of these should form a crucial evidence document for expert evaluation and policy prioritization as per the standard Food-EPI process. In view of this manuscript describes merely the policy actions and goals (but not expert evaluation and policy prioritization), relevant comments are listed below to improve the readability of the manuscript.

Abstract:
Line 38-40: According to the original Food-EPI protocol, only seven domains are investigated. Should the statement be revised to better reflect this? This comment applies throughout the manuscript.

Introduction: The Introduction is detailed and covered most of the aspects to provide an understanding of the intention of the study. Some suggestions have been described below:
Lines 79-80: The statement related to dietary risks should be supported with a reference and ideally the data should be reflective of the Ethiopia condition. For example, referring to the Global Burden of Diseases (https://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-compare/), dietary risks emerge as the fourth highest DALYs in Ethiopia. Further exploration of the types of dietary risks might provide better support to the argument of all forms of malnutrition.
Line 89: To improve readability, could consider revising as "Food retail outlets in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia include…" Lines 95-96: This statement should be more explicit, i.e. "…consumption of ultra-processed foods among the urban Ethiopian adolescents."
Lines 102-105: As the earlier sentence include ‘safe’ foods in the food environments, perhaps an example of this would better guide the understanding.
Lines 110-112: The study only adopted part of the INFORMAS Food-EPI tool and process (e.g. policy component, not infrastructure support component; document analysis without expert rating and prioritisation of policy actions). Should this statement be revised to better reflect the limitations? If relevant, the authors could also explain the reasons that prevent the full application of the Food-EPI process (either in the Introduction or in the Methodology section).
Line 113: This statement is general and should be more explicit to describe what are the type of policies involved in the multisectoral policymaking process in Ethiopia. Also, as Food-EPI is investigating the government (same goes for the intention of this study), thus this paragraph could better position the role of the Ethiopian government and highlight those key policies and strategic plans that contribute to healthy food environments.
Lines 124-126: “We also explored how the food environment policy actions are linked with potential dietary or nutritional outcomes, and how this has evolved over time”…. This statement/ objective seems hard to be achieved and investigated as a cause-effect relationship. Rather, the team explored the potential impacts of food environment policy actions on the diets or the nutritional status of the population.
Lines 127-130: I wonder if this statement should be described in the Methodology (rather than in the Introduction). Also, the study did not merely analyse policy documents but complemented with information sharing from the relevant Ministries? In the Introduction, there is a lack of description of the study significance.
Theoretical framework: A minor comment as below:

Lines 158-160: It is hard to understand how could the authors “…‘assess’ if and how food environment policy actions are linked with potential dietary or nutritional outcomes in Ethiopian policy documents (Fig.1)”. This would probably need to have a cause-effect relationship/association analysis. Basically, the teams just extracted the relevant food environment policies and self-assign coding of potential impacts of these policies into specific sub-themes related to the diets or nutritional status of the population. In addition, referring to Fig. 1, codes for diets and nutritional status limit to policy goals. However, the statement states ‘food environment policy actions’. Which is correct?

Would it be better to say “Based on the nature of food environment policies (i.e. goals and actions), we also explored/ coded the potential impacts of these actions on diets or nutritional status of the Ethiopian population in policy documents (Fig.1)”.

Methodology: In general, the team performed document analysis to extract relevant food environment policy actions and goals and further categorise them as per the defined themes and sub-themes under the codebook. It was not clear how did the Ministry representatives contribute their inputs. Together with other inquiries, there are several issues that required further clarification in this section as outlined below:

Lines 205-206: If the study involved human subjects (e.g. interview and include ‘personal communication’ as a form of evidence), then please inform if ethics approval was obtained. Also, please elaborate on:

[1] Which of the Ministries agreed to provide additional information?
[2] How did the engagement be conducted?
[3] What were the documents shared? The team could also consider putting the details in an Appendix.

Line 211: As the authors specified the terminologies about policy differences between actions and goals (Lines 171-176), please confirm if the IFPRI and UN agencies search limits to ‘policy actions’ only.

Lines 215-224: The authors adopted the Food-EPI tool as the theoretical framework. These statements could be improved to inform whether the collected scopes would involve [1] intentions and plans of the government, [2] government funding for implementation of actions undertaken by NGOs, and [3] actions and policies currently implemented by the government as per the standard data collected in Food-EPI.

Lines 225-228: These seem to be more appropriate to be described under ‘Results’.

Lines 238-245: In regards to the food environment domains, Supplementary material 1 includes food availability and food convenience. These codes were not described in the text and the term ‘food availability’ seems to overlap with food provision. In addition, it would be better if sub-themes related to outcomes (i.e. dietary quantity, quality, diversity and safety, as well as related nutritional status) be defined in Supplementary material 1 too. Also, the thematic analysis techniques should be further described. For instance, “Who did the coding?”, “How did the team reach consensus on the discrepancies?” and the qualitative analytical method with an appropriate reference.

Lines 246-247: As the team evaluated the food quality and safety domain, this is not part of the standard Food-EPI tool. Please
elaborate the approach taken to define and compare the identified policy actions of this domain with 'global indicator of good practice'. Also, the term 'compare' seems required to evaluate. If this is the case, please use an example to explain how did the team perform the comparison. For example, who did the evaluation and the criteria used to determine whether the policy is better than the good practice or not? Otherwise, please revise the statement/term to better accommodate the meaning.

Lines 252-256: Should the limitations be part of the Discussion?

Results: This section needs to be further improved, particularly for the flow of data presentation to improve readability and relevance to each section.

Line 262: What is the difference between 'strategies' and 'plans' in Table 1?

Line 273: The abbreviation of 'NNP' should be spelt out for the first-time use.

Lines 264-296: This section elaborated on issues mainly related to obesity and diet-related NCDs. The aspect related to food quality and safety is described in Table 2 (e.g. food fortification, national safety and quality standards) but are non-specified in the text.

Lines 267-268: This statement and Fig. 3 should be described under Section 3.2.

Lines 275-276: Not clear on the statement. What was the government's focus on agro-processing like the sugar industry?

Line 302: Is the title "proposed" correct as Table 3 describes the Ethiopian policy status that is implemented and planned?

Lines 307-321: These statements do not describe Table 3 (but rather Table 2). A suggestion is to better incorporate these statements into Section 3.1 (Lines 264 to 296), in accordance with the chronological years of the policy enactment.

Line 324: Reference should be described in the Table footnote with appropriate reference style.

Line 326: If the suggestion related to Lines 307-321 is taken into consideration, then this title should be removed and adjust the following sub-titles. The rationale of this is based on the following sub-sections are further elaborations of Table 3.

Lines 362-374: For good practice indicators related to food labelling, the authors did not elaborate on the nutrient declaration policy (e.g. either voluntary or mandatory, the Big 4 declarations or more comprehensive nutrient declarations). Despite there being a front-of-pack labelling recommendation in NSAP for the Prevention and Control of NCDs, the format was not elaborated (either interpretative like Nutri-score, warning label or non-interpretative format such as %GDA). It is thus difficult to make the judgement of 'good evidence'.

Lines 378-380: The statement should be elaborated further on whether a nutrient profiling threshold or specific definition applies to determine foods with high levels of sugar, salt and fat. Also, please check the reference format for a direct quotation (i.e. whether needs to indicate the pp. number in the text e.g. [74, pp. XX]). This comment applies throughout the paper whenever there is a direct quotation.

Lines 426-433: These statements related to food safety seem much relevant to the food quality and safety domain. To better reflect the good practice indicator of the food provision, the national standard for food procurement should be elaborated if it promotes healthy food choices. For instance, a nutrient profiling system applies with examples (e.g. cereals should contain XXg protein per 100g.). Also, how many meals are prepared for the students and specify whether
this should reach certain thresholds/criteria (e.g. meals prepared at schools should achieve XX kcal with milk, fruits and vegetables, etc.).

Lines 452-456: Similarly, the food safety aspects should be reflected in the food quality and safety domain.
Lines 459-463: These statements relate much to food quality and safety domain.
Lines 470-472: This statement relates to the food quality and safety domain.
Lines 474-507: Taking together with the comments earlier on the food quality and safety domain, this section can be further improved to make a concise summary. A highlight of this domain is cutting across other domains (e.g. food retail, provision, trade, etc.).

Line 512: Please provide examples of ‘certain food products’.

Lines 529-530: Figure 3 should be moved to Section 3.2.

Discussion: Benchmarking policy actions with good practice indicators should be highlighted as a form of the accountability framework. This is currently lacking in this section. In addition, minor comments as below:
Lines 535-537: Referring to the earlier comments, 'compares to the Food-EPI good practice benchmarks' and 'how food environment policy actions were linked with potential dietary or nutritional outcomes' might require revisions.

Line 556: Another supporting argument related to sugar and oil subsidies could be triangulated with the population consumption. For instance, the use of the FAO database (https://nutrition),biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s12937-019-0471-1.pdf).

Lines 578-588, 596-597: These statements highlight areas where the current Food-EPI should be improved to better reflect on the LMIC situation. Based on the Ethiopian experience, perhaps the authors might consider proposing new or revising existing good practice indicators to incorporate the scopes of food fortification, informal vendors and water safety.

Lines 589-596: These aspects are already incorporated in the existing good practice indicators of Food-EPI, not sure if these are necessary.

Line 605: Should it be “…that early actions in the food supply chain…

Line 621-622: Is it in Ethiopia?

VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

| Reviewer 1 | This article provides a systematic summary of available formal policy documents and is therefore limited to the ‘supply side’ of food policies in Ethiopia. Unfortunately, no information from the recent UNFSS Food System Dialogues has been used, and insights from real-time compliance are notably absent (although wide literature is available from IFPRI and others). | Partially changed. | Thank you for your observations. The UNFSS dialogues did not fall within the time frame of our data collection. However, we have reviewed the UNFSS Dialogues and commitments as part of Ethiopia’s 2030 vision statement. We have referred to these commitments now in the discussion section. We also reviewed the relevant IFPRI studies on urban retail and prices |
The analytical framework used is rather formal and provides limited insights in the policy process (bargaining & power relationships behind specific policy goals) nor on the compliance.

The merger of 'quality' and 'safety' in one single dimension is highly questionable. It would also be interesting to better understand how the dimensions are related to each other.

The paper would certainly benefit from a more elaborated theoretical framework embedded in the (highly variable) local conditions of Ethiopia. The distinction into three stages is useful, but the analysis provides scarce new insights on the reasons for changing the paradigm and the implementation of policies in practice.

I found the theoretical framework too simple, nowadays we already have more complex models for the food environment of low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), in this case I
| Suggestion/Correction | Action | Notes |
|-----------------------|--------|-------|
| suggest explaining better how the relationships of the different food environments occur and what they would be different in Ethiopia. | Changed | context using the frameworks developed by Osei-Kwasi et al. and Downs et al. We also visualised the food supply chain which overlaps and/or influences the food environment. We have adjusted the framework in this respect and visualised the policies that can influence the different domains. |
| 9 | I believe it is also necessary to better explain the process of developing the theoretical framework. | Changed | We have elaborated the section on the theoretical framework to better explain the process of developing the framework with regard to domains which we have added such as food safety, but also with other components of the food supply chain using existing frameworks developed for the LMIC/African setting. |
| 10 | The authors say they used other theoretical models besides FOODEPI to complement the idea, but do not cite which are these references. | Changed | We added the respective references. |
| 11 | In the methods I also suggest making it clearer that this was a study that used documentary analysis. Documentary analysis (document analysis) is a type of qualitative research in which documents are reviewed by the analyst to assess an appraisal theme. | Changed | We have specified that our study is based on document analysis and added a sentence on that in the methods section. |
| 12 | One doubt I was left with in the analysis is that usually researchers evaluate documents involving the coding of content into subjects like how focus group or interview transcripts are investigated. Was that done in that study? | Changed | We have provided more details on how we conducted the coding of the content of the policy documents, using the framework to develop the codes, and how we analysed that data by collating coded data by themes and sub-themes. |
| 13 | I do consider that the manuscript is long and suggest the authors reduce the descriptive results section as some of the information in the table is repeated in the results. | Changed | We have reduced the descriptive results section by approximately 2 pages. |
| 14 | Line 207 – close the bracket (World ….) | Changed | We added the missing bracket. |
| 15 | Domains: A food safety and quality domain was added – had this been added in previous Food-EPI’s, or did you add this yourself – if so, how did you develop the best practice statement? | Changed | It has been added in Food-Epi studies in Ghana and Kenya and we have now referred to this in the text. |
| 16 | Table 2: You mention a tax on water? I assume this is on bottled water to encourage people to access water from other sources. | Changed | Yes, the tax is related to bottled water. We have therefore added "bottled" in the text. |
| 17 | Page 16, line 17 – change health to healthy (healthy, safe and sanitary) | Changed | Changed it to healthy |
| 18 | Discussion – while there is a lot of detail on the food environment, you only touch lightly on trends in health status (malnutrition, obesity etc). Could you briefly comment on the trends in relation to changes in policy – e.g did the | Partially changed | Our study assessed the policy documents and not their level of implementation or impact on public health outcomes. However, we have added a short reference |
first policy actions on diet-related NCDs coincide with rising obesity rates? I realise that this information may not be available.

| Line | Comment | Changed | Notes |
|------|---------|---------|-------|
| 19   | For those of us who do not know a lot about the political climate in Ethiopia - can you add a sentence or two describing the political climate during this time, briefly expanding on the reference to conflict here. | Partially changed | It is difficult to expand too much on a very complicated situation of which the outcome and potential impact is unclear at this stage. In parts of the country there have been impacts on the food environment due to the conflict and depending on how the current political situation evolves, there could be even large impacts on the food environment but also on policy priorities and on different forms of malnutrition in Ethiopia. We have tried to clarify this better now. |

Review 4

| 20   | Abstract: According to the original Food-EPI protocol, only seven domains are investigated. Should the statement be revised to better reflect this? This comment applies throughout the manuscript. | Not changed | Since we have added “food quality and safety” as an eighth domain, we refer to 8 domains throughout the manuscript. |
| 21   | Introduction: The statement related to dietary risks should be supported with a reference and ideally the data should be reflective of the Ethiopia condition. For example, referring to the Global Burden of Diseases (https://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-compare/), dietary risks emerge as the fourth highest DALYs in Ethiopia. Further exploration of the types of dietary risks might provide better support to the argument of all forms of malnutrition. | Changed | We have made the necessary revisions and add the reference to the GBD data. |
| 22   | Line 89: To improve readability, could consider revising as “Food retail outlets in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia include…” | Changed | We have added “the capital of Ethiopia” in the sentence. |
| 23   | Lines 95-96: This statement should be more explicit, i.e. “…consumption of ultra-processed foods among the urban Ethiopian adolescents.” | Changed | We have added “among urban Ethiopian adolescents” |
| 24   | Lines 102-105: As the earlier sentence include ‘safe’ foods in the food environments, perhaps an example of this would better guide the understanding. | Changed | Thank you for this observation. We have added “incentive-driven training and certification initiatives in informal markets” as an example for policy actions improving food safety. |
| 25   | Lines 110-112: The study only adopted part of the INFORMAS Food-EPI tool and process (e.g. policy component, not infrastructure support component; document analysis without expert rating and prioritisation of policy actions). Should this statement be revised to better reflect the limitations? If relevant, the authors could also explain the reasons that prevent the full application of the Food-EPI process (either in the Introduction or in the Methodology section). | Changed | We have revised these lines in the introduction section and also in the methods section we clarified that our study only focused on the policy component of Food-Epi and only on the document analysis part since at the time of data collection, Covid restrictions were put in place that did not allow us to conduct interviews or workshops. We have addressed this in our limitations. |
| Line(s) | Original Text | Change(s) |
|---------|---------------|-----------|
| 26 | Line 113: This statement is general and should be more explicit to describe what are the type of policies involved in the multisectoral policymaking process in Ethiopia. Also, as Food-EPI is investigating the government (same goes for the intention of this study), thus this paragraph could better position the role of the Ethiopian government and highlight those key policies and strategic plans that contribute to healthy food environments. | We added a sentence before that line to explain which government sectors might be relevant in food environment policymaking. |
| 27 | Lines 124-126: "We also explored how the food environment policy actions are linked with potential dietary or nutritional outcomes, and how this has evolved over time"…. This statement/ objective seems hard to be achieved and investigated as a cause-effect relationship. Rather, the team explored the potential impacts of food environment policy actions on the diets or the nutritional status of the population. | We analysed the goals of the policy documents to understand how the policies intended to address potential dietary outcomes and to see if the proposed actions in the documents matched with the goals they wanted to achieve. We did not assess the actual impact of the policies on diets or nutritional status. We therefore changed the sentence to make this more explicit: "We also explored how the food environment policy actions are linked with setting goals for potential dietary or nutritional outcomes, and how this has evolved over time." |
| 28 | Lines 127-130: I wonder if this statement should be described in the Methodology (rather than in the Introduction). Also, the study did not merely analyse policy documents but complemented with information sharing from the relevant Ministries? In the Introduction, there is a lack of description of the study significance. | We moved the last sentence from the introduction and added a sentence on the study significance. |
| 29 | Theoretical framework: A minor comment as below: Lines 158-160: It is hard to understand how could the authors “…’assess’ if and how food environment policy actions are linked with potential dietary or nutritional outcomes in Ethiopian policy documents (Fig.1)”. This would probably need to have a cause-effect relationship/ association analysis. Basically, the teams just extracted the relevant food environment policies and self-assign coding of potential impacts of these policies into specific sub-themes related to the diets or nutritional status of the population. In addition, referring to Fig. 1, codes for diets and nutritional status limit to policy goals. However, the statement states ‘food environment policy actions’. Which is correct? Would it be better to say “Based on the nature of food environment policies (i.e. goals and actions), we also explored/ coded the potential impacts of these actions on diets or nutritional status”? | We realize that the way we phrased it might be misleading. We assessed if the policy actions and goal settings in the policy documents were coherent. We did not assess any impact on actual outcomes. We have changed the word “outcome” now to “goals” to make this clearer. |
status of the Ethiopian population in policy documents (Fig. 1)"

31 Lines 205-206: If the study involved human subjects (e.g. interview and include ‘personal communication’ as a form of evidence), then please inform if ethics approval was obtained. Also, please elaborate on:

[1] Which of the Ministries agreed to provide additional information?
[2] How did the engagement be conducted?
[3] What were the documents shared? The team could also consider putting the details in an Appendix.

Chang ed This sentence may have been misleading. When contacting the government focal persons, we did not interview them and therefore did not obtain ethics approval, but solely asked for relevant policy documents, which in cases where we could not find some documents, they shared them. We have therefore changed “additional information” to “additional policy documents”. We have also added a section 2.5 on "ethical approval"

32 Line 211: As the authors specified the terminologies about policy differences between actions and goals (Lines 171-176), please confirm if the IFPRI and UN agencies search limits to ‘policy actions’ only.

Chang ed We have moved this paragraph to the results section.

33 Lines 215-224: The authors adopted the Food-EPI tool as the theoretical framework. These statements could be improved to inform whether the collected scopes would involve [1] intentions and plans of the government, [2] government funding for implementation of actions undertaken by NGOs, and [3] actions and policies currently implemented by the government as per the standard data collected in Food-EPI.

Chang ed We have changed the text to specify that our analysis only focused on intentions and plans of the government and not on the other two points.

34 Lines 225-228: These seem to be more appropriate to be described under ‘Results’.

chang ed We have moved this paragraph to the results section.

35 Lines 238-245: In regards to the food environment domains, Supplementary material 1 includes food availability and food convenience. These codes were not described in the text and the term ‘food availability’ seems to overlap with food provision. In addition, it would be better if sub-themes related to outcomes (i.e. dietary quantity, quality, diversity and safety, as well as related nutritional status) be defined in Supplementary material 1 too. Also, the thematic analysis techniques should be further described. For instance, “Who did the coding?”, “How did the team reach consensus on the discrepancies?” and the qualitative analytical method with an appropriate reference.

chang ed Thank you for this valid observation. We used the code “food availability” when the policy documents were not specific about food availability with respect to retail or provisions, but more general. We have explained that in the manuscript as well as the code book. We have also added the codes related to dietary and nutritional goals in the supplementary material. In addition, we provided more detail on how we did the analysis and how we dealt with discrepancies.

36 Lines 246-247: As the team evaluated the food quality and safety domain, this is not part of the standard Food-EPI tool. Please elaborate the approach taken to define and compare the identified policy actions of this domain with ‘global indicator of good practice’. Also, the term ‘compare’ seems required to evaluate. If this is the case, please use an example to explain how did the team perform the comparison. For example, who did the evaluation and the criteria used to determine
| Line | Change Request | Change Description |
|------|----------------|--------------------|
| 37   | chang ed       | We have moved the limitations to the discussion section. |
| 38   | Not chang ed   | These categories referred to the title of the document. In the Ethiopian context, policies are the most overarching, cross-government documents, which are more specified in sectoral strategies, which in turn are translated into practical terms in (action) plans or program documents. We have explained the hierarchy of the different policy documents in the first paragraph of the method section. |
| 39   | Chang ed       | We have now spelled NNP out since it appears for the first time in the text. |
| 40   | Chang ed       | Thank you for this valid observation. We have added information on other policy actions such as food safety as well as food fortification in this section. |
| 41   | Not chang ed   | Since both Fig 3 and this statement refer to changes over time, we considered it to fit well under “historical analysis”. |
| 42   | Chang ed       | We have clarified that statement now in the text. |
| 43   | Not chang ed   | Since we did not analyse the implementation even of the historical policy actions, we consider the term “proposed” as appropriate. |
| 44   | Not chang ed   | This is a valid point. This section aimed to describe policy actions and goals related to food environment that were not specific to one domain but made references to the food environment more broadly. We have now made this clearer by taking out the first two sentences. |
| 45   | Chang ed       | We have put the reference as a footnote under the table. |
| 46   | Not chang ed   | This section is on specific food environment domains whereas the previous section is on food environment actions more generally. We have therefore left the headings 3.2 and 3.3 as they were. |
| Line(s) | Original Text | Change(s) |
|---------|---------------|-----------|
| 47      | Lines 362-374: For good practice indicators related to food labelling, the authors did not elaborate on the nutrient declaration policy (e.g. either voluntary or mandatory, the Big 4 declarations or more comprehensive nutrient declarations). Despite there being a front-of-pack labelling recommendation in NSAP for the Prevention and Control of NCDs, the format was not elaborated (either interpretative like Nutri-score, warning label or non-interpretative format such as %GDA). It is thus difficult to make the judgement of ‘good evidence’. | **Chang ed** We specified now that labelling of ingredients is mandatory for all ingredients. In terms of front-of-pack labelling the policy document did not provide any details on the format. We therefore clarified that in the manuscript. |
| 48      | Lines 378-380: The statement should be elaborated further on whether a nutrient profiling threshold or specific definition applies to determine foods with high levels of sugar, salt and fat. Also, please check the reference format for a direct quotation (i.e. whether needs to indicate the pp. number in the text e.g. [74, pp. XX]). This comment applies throughout the paper whenever there is a direct quotation. | **Chang ed** No nutrient profiling thresholds are provided, which we have specified now in the text. We could not find specific details on quotations in the authors’ guidelines and therefore left the citation style that we had. |
| 49      | Lines 426-433: These statements related to food safety seem much relevant to the food quality and safety domain. To better reflect the good practice indicator of the food provision, the national standard for food procurement should be elaborated if it promotes healthy food choices. For instance, a nutrient profiling system applies with examples (e.g. cereals should contain XXg protein per 100g.). Also, how many meals are prepared for the students and specify whether this should reach certain thresholds/ criteria (e.g. meals prepared at schools should achieve XX kcal with milk, fruits and vegetables, etc.). | **Partiall y chang ed** We have moved the statements that are more relevant for food safety to the respective section. As for food procurement there is no national standard promoting healthy choices. |
| 50      | Lines 452-456: Similarly, the food safety aspects should be reflected in the food quality and safety domain. | **Chang ed** We have moved these statements under the food safety domain. |
| 51      | Lines 459-463: These statements relate much to food quality and safety domain. | **Chang ed** We have moved these statements under the food safety domain. |
| 52      | Lines 470-472: This statement relates to the food quality and safety domain. | **Chang ed** This is a valid point and we have taken this statement out from the policy goal section. |
| 53      | Lines 474-507: Taking together with the comments earlier on the food quality and safety domain, this section can be further improved to make a concise summary. A highlight of this domain is cutting across other domains (e.g. food retail, provision, trade, etc.). | **Chang ed** We have now included all data relevant for food safety under that section. |
| 53      | Line 512: Please provide examples of ‘certain food products’. | **Chang ed** Since the sentence on “certain food products” referred to food safety and not dietary safety, we decided to take it out. |
| 54      | Lines 529-530: Figure 3 should be moved to Section 3.2. | **Chang ed** We have moved figure 3 to section 3.1 which refers to the historical analysis since the graph |
also provides information on the changes over time.

### Version 2 – Review

| REVIEWER                | Mackay, Sally                           | The University of Auckland, Population Health |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| REVIEW RETURNED         | 18-Mar-2022                             |                                              |
| GENERAL COMMENTS        | The authors have addressed the reviewer comments where appropriate |

| REVIEWER                | Ng, See-Hoe                             | Taylor's University                           |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| REVIEW RETURNED         | 26-Mar-2022                             |                                              |
| GENERAL COMMENTS        | The revised manuscript addressed most of the comments raised in the first review. This significantly improved the clarity and flow of the manuscript. Minor suggestions are listed below for the authors’ consideration: |

| Line | Original Text                                                                 | Changes                                                                 | Notes                                                                 |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 56   | Lines 535-537: Referring to the earlier comments, 'compares to the Food-EPI good practice benchmarks' and 'how food environment policy actions were linked with potential dietary or nutritional outcomes' might require revisions. | Changed | As in the other sections, we have changed “outcomes” to “goals” to avoid any confusion.
| 57   | Line 556: Another supporting argument related to sugar and oil subsidies could be triangulated with the population consumption. For instance, the use of the FAO database (https://nutritionj.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s12937-019-0471-1.pdf) | Partially changed | We have triangulated the argument on the subsidies with research from Ethiopia and Egypt on unintended consequences of such subsidies.
| 58   | Lines 578-588, 596-597: These statements highlight areas where the current Food-EPI should be improved to better reflect on the LMIC situation. Based on the Ethiopian experience, perhaps the authors might consider proposing new or revising existing good practice indicators to incorporate the scopes of food fortification, informal vendors and water safety. | Changed | We have added some examples of good practice indicators that could be considered for agro-processing or food safety.
| 59   | Lines 589-596: These aspects are already incorporated in the existing good practice indicators of Food-EPI, not sure if these are necessary. | Changed | We took out “conclude that taxation of unhealthy food should be monitored and benchmarked,” but left that “subsidies on unhealthy foods” should be monitored.
| 60   | Line 605: Should it be “…that early actions in the food supply chain…” | Partially changed | We realize that this sentence was not clear and have therefore rephrased it since we wanted to refer to actions in the supply chain before food reaches the food environment.
| 61   | Line 621-622: Is it in Ethiopia? | Changed | Yes, we have added “in Ethiopia” |
Abstract, Line 36-37: As reflected in the first comment, the original INFORMAS Food-EPI protocol consists of ONLY seven domains under the policy component (without food quality and safety domain that was adopted in this study). Worth noting, Food-EPI explores two components [i.e. policy (n=7 domains) and infrastructure support (n=6)], of which each investigates different domains (but not including food quality and safety domain). Therefore, the current statement of “The eight food environment domains of the Healthy Food-Food Environment Policy Index (Food-EPI) guided our coding framework.” is still misleading. Suggest revising this statement to better reflect the adjustment. For instance, “The coding framework was guided by the policy component (n=7 domains) of the Healthy Food-Environment Policy Index (Food-EPI), with modifications to include a local relevant domain of food quality and safety.” Also, please refer to the comment under Methodology.

Introduction, Lines 103-104: Should it be more explicit in the statement to reflect food safety? E.g. “…. and incentive-driven training and certification initiatives related to food safety in informal markets.”

Theoretical framework, Lines 136-138: Similar to my comment in Abstract, the original INFORMAS Food-EPI policy component only consists of 7 domains. The statement “… eight different food environment domains…” is incorrect?

Methodology, Lines 237-238: Reference 53 seems odd to be placed at the end of this statement. In addition, the study includes documents such as policies (as detailed in Lines 190-191), which are usually interpreted as ‘those actions that are currently implemented by the government’. However, Lines 237-238 seem to indicate evidence collected for this study is only limited to those government’s plans (yet to be implemented). Is it true? If yes, then this should also be reflected in the abstract section.

Results, Lines 402-403: Perhaps can just revise as “…. but without specifying the nutrient profiling thresholds”.

**VERSION 2 – AUTHOR RESPONSE**

| No | Reviewer comment | Reply |
|----|------------------|-------|
| 1  | Abstract, Line 36-37: As reflected in the first comment, the original INFORMAS Food-EPI protocol consists of ONLY seven domains under the policy component (without food quality and safety domain that was adopted in this study). Worth noting, Food-EPI explores two components [i.e. policy (n=7 domains) and infrastructure support (n=6)], of which each investigates different domains (but not including food quality and safety domain). Therefore, the current statement of “The eight food environment domains of the Healthy Food-Food Environment Policy Index (Food-EPI) guided our coding framework.” is still misleading. | Thank you for this valid comment. We have corrected it now to reflect that Food-Epi includes only 7 domains to which we added an 8th. |
|   |   |
|---|---|
| Suggest revising this statement to better reflect the adjustment. For instance, “The coding framework was guided by the policy component (n=7 domains) of the Healthy Food-Environment Policy Index (Food-EPI), with modifications to include a local relevant domain of food quality and safety.” Also, please refer to the comment under Methodology. | We have now specified that the training and certification refers to food safety and hygiene. |
| 2 | Introduction, Lines 103-104: Should it be more explicit in the statement to reflect food safety? E.g. “…. and incentive-driven training and certification initiatives related to food safety in informal markets.” | We have corrected it to seven domains. |
| 3 | Theoretical framework, Lines 136-138: Similar to my comment in Abstract, the original INFORMAS Food-EPI policy component only consists of 7 domains. The statement “… eight different food environment domains…” is incorrect? | We have moved this sentence up to where we introduce the methodology, explaining which parts of the Food-Epi approach we adopted and which not. For instance, we did not assess any funding data or level of implementation since the policy documents are only describing policy intentions not the actual implementation. We have explained this in the methods section and also discuss this as a limitation in the discussion section. We have now also mentioned in the abstract that our study assessed intentions and plans of government. |
| 4 | Methodology, Lines 237-238: Reference 53 seems odd to be placed at the end of this statement. In addition, the study includes documents such as policies (as detailed in Lines 190-191), which are usually interpreted as ‘those actions that are currently implemented by the government’. However, Lines 237-238 seem to indicate evidence collected for this study is only limited to those government’s plans (yet to be implemented). Is it true? If yes, then this should also be reflected in the abstract section. | 
| 5 | Results, Lines 402-403: Perhaps can just revise as “… but without specifying the nutrient profiling thresholds”. | We have made this revision |