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Vegetable Production and Consumption in Bamako, Mali

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Abstract

The population in Bamako, Mali has an annual growth rate of 4.5% % the highest in Africa % and the city ranks as the sixth most rapidly growing urban area in the world. Rapid urbanisation causes change in social relations and lifestyles, and increases demand for food. Fast urban growth can lead to malnutrition when poor people migrate from rural areas to cities and have no means to generate income or obtain a nutritionally complete diet. Our study aimed to understand the role of vegetables in the food supply of urban Bamako, and to explore the nutritional and other consumption-related knowledge among households. Focus group discussions on vegetable gardening activities and individual interviews were conducted in two districts of Bamako where poor people are concentrated. Twenty vegetable growers were interviewed for vegetable production and market aspects; 20 household women were interviewed for topics related to food availability, preparation, preference and consumption, as well as nutritional knowledge. Twelve small and medium enterprises in Bamako, two in the north of Mali, and 10 households in two districts of Bamako were interviewed. People in Bamako consumed three meals a day with cereals (rice, millet and sorghum) as the main staples. Vegetables were consumed daily during the main production season, in small quantities as a side dish. The most frequently consumed vegetables included onions, tomatoes, okra and eggplant. Various types of seasoning cubes were added to the vegetable dishes. Most of the vegetables were obtained from farmers' or households' own production. In Bamako, gardening plays an important role in improving income and the socioeconomic status of families. However, more people are eating outside the home. Family members, neighbours, television and radio broadcasts were the main sources of nutrition information; nutrition and health centres were mentioned as sources by only a few respondents. Markets for processed vegetables remain limited, as people in the area tend to prefer fresh produce. More investment in promoting urban gardening techniques, such as mobile gardens and vertical or roof gardens, promoting healthy diets, and improving the quality and acceptance of processed vegetable products will enhance vegetable availability and consumption.

Keywords: Consumption, garden, nutrition, urbanisation, vegetables