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Linkages in Rural-Urban Continuum, Focused on the Vegetable Value Chain: Mali

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Abstract

This study examines linkages between rural and urban areas in vegetable value chain activities in the southern part of Mali. The value chain is characterised by a complex and informal network of farmers, middlemen, wholesalers, processors, vendors and customers.

The rapid growth of Bamako, Mali's capital and largest city with nearly two million inhabitants can be attributed in part to the temporary and permanent migration of people from villages. This movement has increased urban food demand, yet malnutrition remains an issue for many.

Methodology Primary data on horticulture activities and food consumption from rural, urban, and peri-urban areas in southern Mali was collected in 2010–2011 from 80 households at four randomly selected sites. Collection methods included individual interviews, focus group discussions, observations and secondary data.

Most villagers engaged in vegetable production sold about 80% of their vegetables directly to traders and consumed the remainder. Rural populations involved in agriculture maintained gardens as a secondary activity to generate some income; women also tended small vegetable plots to produce food for their families in town, and to give as gifts. Small-scale traders, mostly women, collected vegetables directly from farmers' fields. They transported their crops to the nearest local or urban markets by public transportation or bicycle. Input vendors operating in towns, peri-urban and urban areas played an important role in the transmission of crop production information and publicity for new seed, fertilisers, pesticides and equipment.

Land insecurity is the main factor limiting vegetable production inside the capital city.

Small amounts of vegetables were processed by rural and rural household members following traditional methods.

Bamako offers a large market for rural producers of vegetables and vegetable products, providing income opportunities for rural people, mainly in the informal sector and in gardening activities. Further research questions should focus on how rural-urban vegetable value chain can be developed to enhance the accessibility, availability and use of vegetables to sustain food and income security.

Keywords: Informal network of actors along the value chain, rural-urban linkages in the vegetable value chain