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Peri-Urban Neighbourhoods and Access to Food: A Case Study Conducted in Tamale, Northern Ghana

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Abstract

Given the ongoing urbanisation processes in West Africa and the emerging importance of food and nutrition security in rapidly growing cities, this study investigates characteristics of peri-urban neighbourhoods and food access in Tamale, northern Ghana.

The study uses a comparative approach by looking at urban (n=1), peri-urban (n=3) and rural (n=1) neighbourhoods. It further compares food access patterns in two different seasonal time frames of the year in order to identify seasonal variations.

The food related infrastructure of the sampled neighbourhoods was studied through neighbourhood mappings. Within the same neighbourhoods, a random sampling approach was used to carry out a household food access survey.

Results reveal that peri-urban neighbourhoods are heterogeneous in terms of food access, as they resemble both the urban and rural comparative values. The two central Tamale markets are the most important food source for the majority of food products in all urban and peri-urban neighbourhoods, then followed by neighbourhood hawkers. In peri-urban neighbourhoods, backyards play an important role in household vegetable supply during the rainy season. Especially during dry season, all studied neighbourhoods have limited access to fresh and healthy foods, such as fruits, vegetables and meat, within the defined neighbourhood boundaries. The data further reveals influential factors on household decision making in terms of purchase patterns and food provisioning. The costs of food and household financial capabilities appear to be the most important influential factors regarding food access patterns. Further, seasonal price fluctuations have a strong impact on the diversity, frequency and quantity of the obtained and consumed foods. During the dry season, prices for most food products are high and the availability and accessibility for some seasonal food products is limited. These results indicate a seasonal drop in dietary diversity and hence, a potential nutrition insecurity.

Keywords: Food and nutrition security, food markets, neighbourhood mapping