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Determinants of Nutrient and Dietary Gaps in the Changing Food Systems in Nigeria

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Abstract

Improved nutrition is thought to have multiplier effect across the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Yet, much like other low and middle income countries, achieving the SDGs in Nigeria will be challenged by co-existence of undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and growing rates of overweight and obesity in the population. The food environment is also changing both in urban and rural areas, which is likely to create new nutritional challenges while opening opportunities. This requires a dynamic approach to identify entry points for intervention. However, a lack of food consumption surveys specifically designed for food and nutrition research from representative samples remains a major constraint to studying nutrient and dietary gaps. Previous studies mainly rely on cross-sectional observations and have limited scope in terms of: capturing the dynamics in both rural and urban food systems, their geographic coverage and indicators of diet quality (e.g. they often use caloric intake with no or limited information on the content of micronutrients in the diet). We overcome many of these limitations by making use of multiple round Living Standard Measurement Surveys (LSMS-ISA) in Nigeria. These are large national and sub-national representative surveys, and they are a rich source of information from the food systems perspective as nutrient and dietary intake can be linked to different aspects of the food systems. We first estimate nutrient and dietary gaps for the individual from household data, in terms of adult female equivalent which proxies intrahousehold distribution of food. We then employ panel data econometrics to identify factors that may explain observed differences in nutrient and dietary gaps over time and space.

Keywords: Dietary gap, food systems, Nigeria