

# Direct marketing activities during Covid-19 lockdown and potential for rural-urban linkages in Bengaluru, India.

Neda Yousefian<sup>1</sup>, M. Soubadra Devy<sup>2</sup>, K. Geetha<sup>3</sup>, Christoph Dittrich<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Institute of Geography, Georg-August Universität Göttingen, Germany

<sup>2</sup>Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment, Bengaluru, India

<sup>3</sup>University of Agricultural Sciences, GKVK, Bengaluru, India

## Background

Food system disruptions linked to the Covid-19 pandemic:

- Market closures or limited operations
- Travel restrictions
- Labor migration
- Panic shopping
- Food loss

Media reported farmers and consumers using social media and e-commerce for direct marketing.

Central research questions:

- 1) How has the Covid-19 pandemic impacted food transitions and consumption practices among the middle class in Bengaluru?
- 2) How do these changes align with sustainable food systems?



Image 1. Farmers sell pineapples to urban Bengaluru residents through the Shanthinagar Resident Welfare Association. Photo by Prasad Shivarudrappa

## Methods

Online survey

- 117 urban middle-class households

Telephone survey

- 117 Resident Welfare Associations (RWA)
- six Farmer Producer Organizations (FPO)

Table 1. Food purchasing behavior (fresh fruits and vegetables) before and during lockdown. (n=117)

Type of Vendor	Before lockdown	During lockdown
Directly from farmer	8%	9%
Wet (open-air) market	38%	21%
Pushcart vendor	45%	40%
Vegetable/Fruit stand	78%	69%
Supermarket	46%	32%

## Conclusion and Next Steps

Linking RWAs and FPOs can scale up direct marketing activities throughout Bengaluru.

Support for local farmers and demand to purchase healthy local food increased with Covid-19 pandemic.

Predicted growth of FPOs and consumer interest in CSA opens new opportunities for sustainable rural-urban linkages between farmers and consumers.

## Results

Consumers purchasing directly from farmers increased during lockdown, while decreasing for all other vendors.

During 1<sup>st</sup> lockdown, March to June 2020, direct marketing activities were engaged by:

- 42 of 117 RWAs
- Five of six FPOs

Motivation for RWAs:

- to help farmers
- to reduce shopping trips of residents

Three of five FPOs direct market to urban consumers as regular, pre-pandemic activity.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA):

38% of urban households want to join a CSA but not currently available in their location.