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“Can agroecological farming feed the world?
Farmers’ and academia’s views”

We need to go back to the time of our grandparents: Perceptions of health and environmental aspects within a rapidly changing food landscape – findings from a qualitative study conducted in urban Burkina Faso

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Abstract

Objective: To explore the perceptions of health and environmental aspects associated with current and former dietary habits in urban Burkina Faso.

Design: Exploratory qualitative study using purposeful maximum variation sampling. Conduct of semi-structured face-to-face interviews in Morré and French which were audio-recorded, translated into French, and transcribed verbatim. Data were analysed inductively, using thematic analysis.

Setting: Three informal and two formal neighbourhoods within the consisted area of the Health and Demographic Surveillance System (HDSS) Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, February – March 2021

Participants: A total of 36 participants aged 25–73 years were interviewed. 18 males (9 formal, 9 informal) and 18 females (8 formal, 10 informal) were surveyed.

Results: The main characteristics that participants associated with a healthy and eco-friendly diet were traditional, local, natural, pure, organic, and transparent ways of producing, processing, and preparing food. However, several perceived barriers complicate to follow these ideals. Importantly, limited financial resources were described to narrow dietary choices, as satisfying hunger often has highest priority. Other experienced barriers were related to availability of products, limited time, compromising food choices within the family, and lack of knowledge about the relations between nutrition, health, and the environment. Most of these barriers were related to experienced transitions regarding the food system, lifestyle, and climate.

Conclusions: To reduce the described barriers, public health interventions need to target different levels, synergistically addressing knowledge promotion and consolidation of beliefs in traditional diets as healthy and eco-friendly. Furthermore, political action is needed to reduce financial barriers, enhance public health, and make the local food system more resilient to climate change.

Keywords: Burkina Faso, healthy and sustainable nutrition, Ouagadougou, qualitative study