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“Competing pathways for equitable food systems transformation:
Trade-offs and synergies”

The retail food environment as driver of consumer choices and source of decent livelihoods

CÉLINE TERMOTE¹, INGE BROUWER², MARK LUNDY¹

¹*The Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, Food Environment and Consumer Behaviour, Kenya*

²*Wageningen University and Research, Human Nutrition & Health, The Netherlands*

Abstract

Globally, poor quality diets are associated with 11 million premature adult deaths, while healthy diets are not affordable for over 3 billion people. Current investments in food systems transformations to increase production, incomes and livelihoods are insufficient to improve low quality diets. The Sustainable Healthy Diets through Food Systems Transformation OneCGIAR initiative (in short SHiFT) looks at the food system from a unique consumer-food environment perspective, addressing consumer choices and their drivers. The role of the retail environment is thereby crucial, as the retail food environment is one of the important drivers of food choices and consumption. SHiFTs goals, are trifold: 1) to increase demand for and consumption of sustainable, healthy diets through consumer awareness; 2) to support micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and informal sector actors in the retail food environment and test innovations that have potential to deliver more nutritious, safe, affordable and sustainably produced foods; and 3) to improve livelihoods, gender, equity and social inclusiveness in all food system sectors. An ambitious research plan was set up to gather information on the food environment, consumers and MSMEs in Vietnam and will start in October in Ethiopia. Data gathered are used to explore food environment exposure, drivers of food choice, lived experiences and dietary patterns and their determinants. An analytical framework and typology of MSMEs was developed and innovations to deliver sustainable nutritious foods and support consumers in achieving sustainable healthy diets are being co-developed. Additionally, an important part of work in SHiFT evolves around supporting (key) stakeholders and multi-stakeholder processes through capacity sharing, co-analysis, evaluation and evidence generation to plan and implement national food system transformation pathways and game changing solutions.