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## Understanding consumers’ and retailers’ preferences for nutritious foods in Ethiopia: A discrete choice experiment approach

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### Abstract

Poor diets significantly contribute to the burden of malnutrition in many low- and middle-income countries. Increasing uptake of sustainable nutritious foods, especially in low-income households, requires that more of these foods are supplied to their food environment in a way that will enhance desirability and uptake. This study sought to identify attributes that retailers look for when buying nutritious foods from their suppliers and what consumers look for when buying these foods from the retailers. The results will help in proposing interventions that could be tailored to promote scalable, evidence-based innovations and policies to help to promote delivery of sustainable nutritious foods to consumers. Data was collected using a discrete choice experiment conducted among retailers and consumers of tomatoes, bananas, and lentils in low-income neighbourhoods of Ethiopia’s capital, Addis Ababa, and rural district and town, Butajira, in May 2024. Choice experiments allow for valuation of products using both price and non-price attributes. For tomatoes the non-price attributes assessed include production technology, ripeness, and flesh content. For bananas, they include ripeness, presence, or absence of dark spots when ripe, and size of the fruit. For lentils, they comprise of colour, presence or absence of impurities, and cooking time. A total of 700 retailers and 700 consumers were interviewed from the markets within Addis Ababa and Butajira. Data is being analysed using a mixed logit regression model to obtain preference for selected attributes, and the willingness to pay. Initial results show that retailers’ preference for selected attributes may be influenced by consumers’ preference and product shelf life. Given the low purchasing power in low-income households, both retailers and consumers prefer lower prices for these products and the premium placed on their preferred attributes are relatively small. Detailed results are presented in the manuscript. We conclude that increasing consumption of nutritious foods in low-income households would require targeted interventions. Interventions that enhance desirability of products coupled with relatively affordable prices may promote consumption.

**Keywords:** Choice experiment, developing countries, malnutrition, nutritious foods