**Tropentag, September 16-18, 2026, hybrid conference**

"Towards multi-functional agro-ecosystems
promoting climate resilient futures"

# Consumers' preference for beef quality attributes and modern market system: evidence from Nigeria

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**Abstract**

The dominance of traditional, unregulated food markets and the lack of a credible mechanism to signal food quality in many low- and middle-income countries continue to undermine consumers' dietary quality. Although modern market systems – such as supermarkets - are gradually emerging and have the potential to enhance food quality signaling, empirical evidence suggests that consumers in SSA often exhibit a strong preference for traditional market outlets, motivated by perceptions of superior taste, freshness, and familiarity. Focusing on the case of beef safety, this study employs a discrete choice experiment (DCE) to analyse how 209 urban Nigerian consumers make trade-offs between market outlet types (supermarkets, modern abattoirs, traditional slaughterhouses, and open markets) and beef quality attributes (meat colour, fat content, and production system). A split-sample design is used to examine differences in preferences between scenarios with and without certification labeling, and mixed logit models are estimated to account for preference heterogeneity. The results indicate that in the absence of a certification label, consumers are indifferent between modern abattoirs and traditional slaughterhouses, but express a strong aversion to supermarkets. Furthermore, consumers prefer low-fat beef and are indifferent to meat colour when meat is unlabeled. However, introducing a certification label significantly shifts consumer preferences toward light-red, lean beef and, surprisingly, beef from traditional slaughterhouses. These findings yield two key implications. First, consumers need to be better informed about the implications of traditional market systems for their health and how modern retail infrastructure can improve their dietary quality. Second, food safety certification labels alter consumers' heuristics to infer quality from observable product and market attributes.

**Keywords:** Beef attributes, certification verification, discrete choice experiment, food safety, market transformation system

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