

Egerton University



Tegemeo Institute of Agricultural Policy and Development

Working paper 16

FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION PATTERNS AND SUPPLY CHAIN SYSTEMS IN URBAN KENYA: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND INVESTMENT PRIORITIES

By

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Support for this research has been provided by the Tegemeo Agricultural Monitoring and Policy Analysis Project (TAMPA) between Tegemeo Institute/Egerton University and the Department of Agricultural Economics at Michigan State University. Financial support for this project is provided by the Kenya Mission of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

ABSTRACT

Fruits and vegetables are an important source of food for a large number of Kenyans and comprise every household diet. They play an important role in nutritional balance, as they are rich in vitamins and other nutrients that are vital in controlling diseases. However, despite high rates of population growth, coupled with still higher rates of urbanization which have caused large increases in local demand for fruits and vegetables in urban centers, little empirical evidence exists concerning urban consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. Moreover, information that links the consumption to trade issues is generally lacking.

This study looks at the urban consumption patterns of fresh fruits and vegetables and the major supply chain systems used in the distribution of fresh produce. The study integrates issues of supply chain organization and performance into the analysis of consumer demand for fresh produce. In particular, the study looks at how system organization and performance affects the ability of the system to satisfy consumer demand for fresh produce. The study pursues four main objectives, namely, to estimate the household consumption of fruits and vegetables per adult equivalent; to examine the shopping patterns of fresh produce consumers as compared to other food purchases; to examine the various supply chain systems for fresh produce;

This study is based in Nairobi. Data for the study was obtained from an urban survey conducted by Tegemeo in 2003, involving 524 consumers using the CBS clusters throughout Nairobi conducted in November, 2003. This has been augmented by interviews with 143 wholesale and retail traders involved in urban fresh produce trade. A further survey of the major wholesale markets between December 2004 and March 2005 was carried out to determine the commodity flows and the infrastructure in place in these markets.

The results show that fresh fruits and vegetables account for slightly over one-fourth of the households' total basic food expenditure, second only to staples which account for slightly over a third of the expenditure, and that this share is steady across all income groups. The study reveals that, while there are households consuming fresh produce at levels below WHO/FAO recommended levels across all income groups, the poorest people in urban areas also tend to be the lowest consumers of fruit and vegetables. Also, as income increases, the level of fruit and vegetable consumption increases and approaches the WHO/FAO standards. The study further shows that fresh produce consumption is influenced by education level, age and the gender of household head. The fresh produce consumers tend to be highly specialized in terms of their shopping patterns as compared to other food groups, often dominating the open air markets and kiosks. The study shows the importance of improving the traditional markets as a way of improving the marketing and hence consumption of fresh produce in urban centers and draws policy implications for government and investment priorities.