

URBAN DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION PATTERNS FOR MEAT: TRENDS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Paul Gamba

Abstract

Livestock products constitute a major component of urban household diet across income groups. However, Consumer concerns receive little attention in policy formulation given the low profile such issues elicit and lack of credible consumer advocacy or lobby groups. This situation is further complicated by the absence of informative studies on urban or rural meat consumption patterns.

The study utilizes data from an urban consumption survey conducted in the Nairobi metropolitan area by Tegemeo Institute using Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) sample frame towards the end of 2003. The survey data is complimented by slaughter figures and prices from VSF-Suisse and the various slaughterhouses in Nairobi.

This study characterizes household meat consumption in Nairobi and compares per adult equivalent consumption across income quintiles. It further examines the factors influencing domestic consumption including meat prices, channels of acquisition and the traits of the household head for instance education, gender and age.

The results indicate that meat is consumed by a large proportion of the sample but essentially remains a luxury good whose consumption increases with increasing income. Middle and high-income households consume significantly large amounts of beef, chicken and eggs within the home compared to low-income households. This phenomenon reveals that health concerns especially for red meat do not necessarily influence consumption levels for both low and high-income groups. However, the consumption of chicken and eggs by high-income and educated groups appear to be responding to health concerns. Chevron (goat meat) and mutton (sheep) are hardly consumed at home. Channels of acquisition influence price and ultimately consumption patterns especially for chicken and eggs where there exists some form of product differentiation.

The foregoing implies the potential to increase domestic consumption of meat exists within the lower income groups but can only be harnessed through lower prices or higher incomes. As the Government focuses on increasing livestock productivity, consumer concerns should, similarly be given due consideration.

Livestock development policies must adjust to changing consumer behavior and confront marketing inefficiencies that prevent the translation of productivity gains into consumer gains.