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Consumption patterns among rural households in Kenya: Insights from High potential and Semi-arid regions

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Abstract

Food being the most important item in the household consumption basket and a basic need for human life requires attention and constant monitoring. In Kenya, the last comprehensive survey that captured food consumption and expenditure details was the Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey (KIHBS) in 2005/06 with the 2015/16 survey results yet to be released. This study sought to bridge the information gap occasioned by lack of updated evidence on household consumption which tends to change rapidly. The study sought to assess the consumption patterns among rural households in high potential and semi-arid regions of Kenya. Specifically, the study sought to examine trends and changes in rural household food consumption; evaluate relative importance of the different food supply sources; and assess the implications of the observed patterns on household nutrition. The study employs a comparative analysis approach from two cross-sectional expenditure and consumption surveys conducted in 2013 and 2015.

Results show a decline in consumption of Cereals; Vegetable; Meats; and animal products especially in high potential areas with consumption relatively stable in semi-arid zones. There is also a general increase in consumption of rice, sifted maize meal, and beans while consumption of straight run maize meal and wheat declined. The study reveals that most food items consumed by rural households are sourced through purchases though production is also an important source for cereals, tuber crops and fruits. The daily per capita protein and zinc intake was below the Estimated Average Requirements (EAR) for majority of the households especially low income households. Low calorie and iron intake was also prevalent among the low income households. The general declining trend in consumption raises concern that household nutrition could further fall if not checked and constantly monitored. The increasing consumption of rice is a signal of potential demand. The County and

National governments and other actors must respond to the signal by instituting measures aimed at improving rice productivity and production to meet the growing demand. Stakeholders must also raise awareness and promote the consumption of fruits and vegetable to meet protein and zinc requirements currently below EAR.

For further assistance, more information or if you would like to conduct interviews with the Lead Principal Investigator, you can do so through: Judy Kimani, 0720 96 33 48, (jkimani@tegemeo.org).