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Cost and affordability of healthy diet for households in Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria**Otu W. Ibok***University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom*

Statement of Problem: In Africa, an alarming 149 million individuals cannot afford even the most basic nutritious diet, and a staggering 1.5 billion people lack access to a diet that provides essential nutrients. This issue is particularly pressing in Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, which faces the challenge of providing its growing population with nutritious diets. This study investigated the cost and affordability of healthy diet in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. We specifically explore the cost of healthy diet that meets Healthy Diet Basket (HDB) Food-Based Dietary recommendations and the affordability of healthy diet using food expenditure for households in the state. We used Cost of Recommended Diet (CoRD) to measure the cost of healthy diet and calculated affordability by comparing the cost of food incurred by a household per day with their income or expenditure.

Findings: The study revealed that in 2018/2019, the average cost of a healthy diet in the state was \$1.27 per day, lower than the national average. However, recent government policies and currency devaluation have led to a rise in food prices, posing challenges for households to afford a nutritious diet. Animal-source foods, vitamins, and fruits were particularly expensive, potentially limiting access for low-income households. The average household spending on food was \$0.18 per day when adjusted for the adult equivalent, indicating limited resources for purchasing nutrient-dense foods. The study also highlighted that 98% of households in Akwa Ibom State, especially in rural areas, cannot afford a daily healthy diet, posing a risk of malnutrition and related health issues. Conclusion: The research concludes that the high cost of a healthy diet and the limited resources of households in Akwa Ibom State pose significant challenges to food security and nutrition. Recommendations include prioritizing interventions to reduce poverty and stabilize food prices to ensure access to healthy diets for all households.

Biography

Otu Ibok is an Agricultural and Food Economist with a passion for advancing research and innovation to alleviate hunger and malnutrition, thereby improving health and well-being. His expertise lies in global food security and nutrition, healthy diets, impact evaluation, and understanding the dynamics of poverty and vulnerability within the food system. During his PhD research at the University of Reading, UK, he developed a ground-breaking multidimensional food security metric called the Vulnerability to Food Insecurity Index (VFII). This index measures and monitors households' vulnerability to food insecurity in low and middle-income countries (LMICs). Otu has gained several years of experience in research, teaching, and administration at the University of Edinburgh, UK, the University of Reading, UK, and Akwa Ibom State University, Nigeria.