INITIATIVE ON
Transforming Agrifood Systems in South Asia

Food purchasing behavior in Rangpur, Bangladesh:

Shopping practices, food perceptions, and aspirations

Data Note 25

December 2023

ABOUT THIS DATA NOTE | The Transforming Agrifood Systems in South Asia (TAFSSA) district agrifood systems assessment aims to provide a reliable, accessible, and integrated evidence base that links farm production, market access, dietary patterns, climate risk responses, and natural resource management with gender as a cross-cutting issue in rural areas of Bangladesh, India, and Nepal. It is designed to be a district-level multi-year assessment. Using data collected in February–March 2023, this data note describes who is shopping for food in households, frequency, place of purchase, reasons for preferences for places of purchase, and perceptions about food. This is one of a set of data notes that together provide a holistic picture of the agrifood system on the themes of climate, gender, production, markets, and diets in the district.

Figure 1. District location in Bangladesh

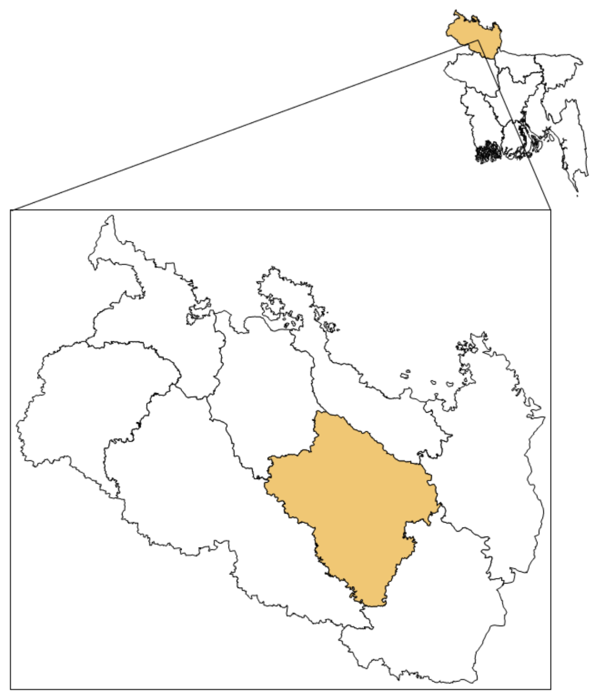

Figure 2. Highlights from this data note

80% of shoppers in Rangpur are males	**~28%** of shoppers buy unhealthy foods	**78%** of shoppers buy food items from haats	**>70%** of shoppers prefer haats because of distance and convenience	**5%** of shoppers perceive healthy foods to be unsafe to eat

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OVERVIEW OF CONTENTS

TAFSSA's district agrifood systems assessment aimed to interview three members from each household: an adult female (aged 20+ years), an adult male (aged 20+ years), and an adolescent (aged 10-19 years). Details on the household and respondent sampling strategy are provided at the end of this data note.

This data note begins by presenting the background characteristics of households, focusing on the female and male adults responsible for purchasing food for their households. It then examines the frequency of food purchases of seven common food items (dal, eggs, fish, green leafy vegetables, bananas, biscuits, and deep-fried foods) in the past 12 months and the cost of the most recent purchase. Furthermore, the data note provides insights into the top three sources of food acquisition, the distance to these sources, and the reasons for preferring them.

Finally, this data note delves into what drives respondents' purchasing decisions and their aspirations regarding food purchases. Definitions of different market types discussed in the data note and a list of the figures and tables are provided below.

MARKET DEFINITIONS

City market: A multi-vendor urban food market held daily in a fixed location where traders and farmers set up shops during the day.

Haat: A market where food products are sold in bulk directly by manufacturers, farmers, or artisans at a fair price, usually in a permanent or semi-permanent structure

Retail outlet: Any type of single vendor shops at a fixed location selling groceries, vegetables, fruits, or animal-source foods such as meat, fish, and dairy.

List of figures

WHO IS PURCHASING FOOD?

Table 1. Household and individual characteristics

Household characteristics	
Number	1000
Female-headed, %	13
Education of head, years	4
Average household size, members	4
Involved in agriculture, %	96
Has improved toilet, %	99
Drinking water source	
Tubewell or borehole, %	98
Piped into dwelling, %	1
Main source of income	
Crop cultivation, %	37
Business, %	26
Wages, %	21
Type of fuel used for cooking	
Wood, %	93
Straw/grass, %	79
LPG/natural gas, %	21

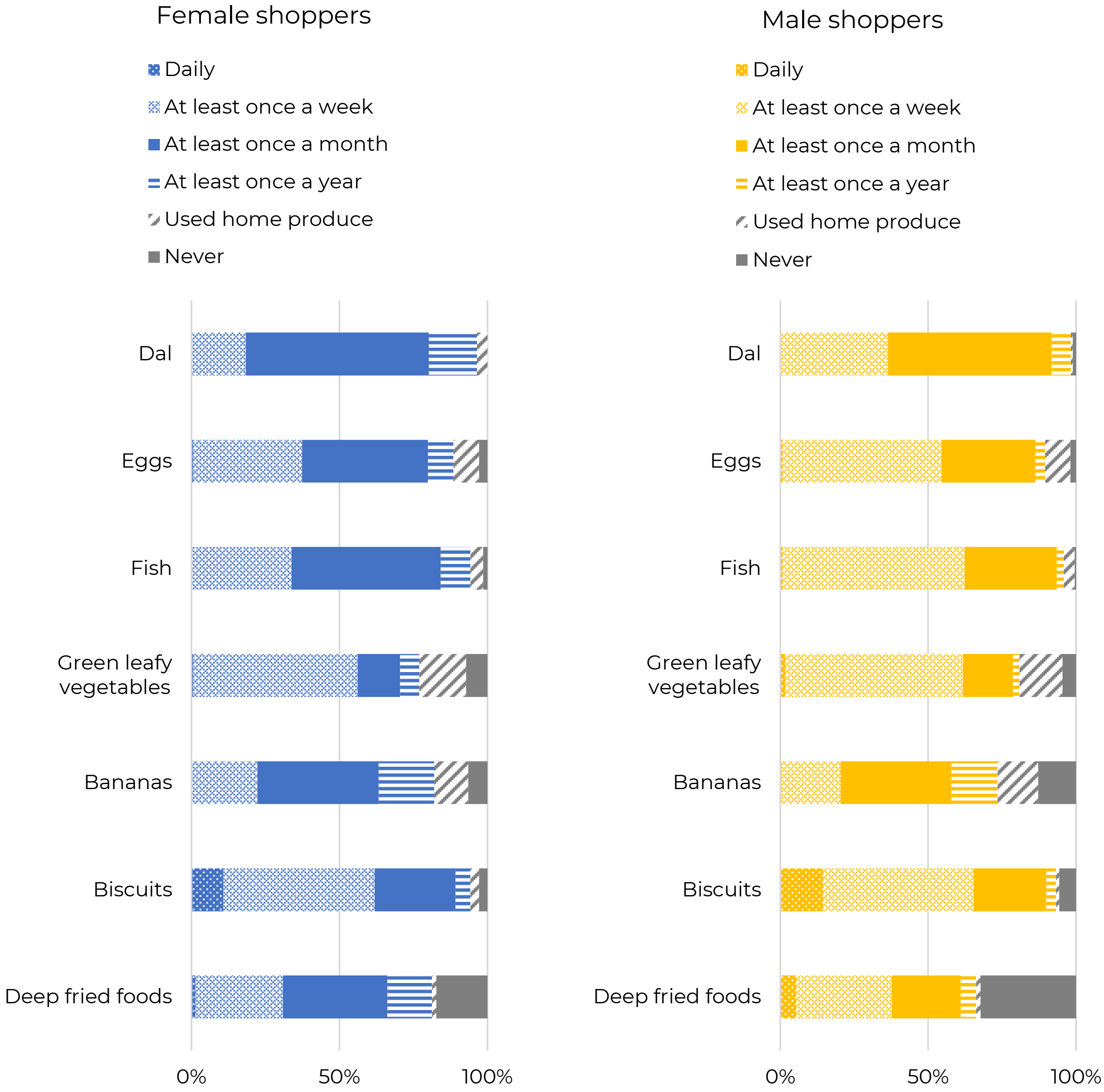
Individual characteristics		
	Number of shoppers = 571	
	Female shoppers (N=113)	Male shoppers (N=458)
Average age (years)	37	44
Relation to household head		
Household head, %	98	99
Spouse, %	1	0
Other relation, %	1	1
Education completed (years)	5	4
Employment status		
Employed, %	44	100
Primary occupation		
Farming, %	21	41
Unpaid household work, %	62	0
Own business/ self employed, %	4	31
Casual non-farm labour (paid), %	4	12
Salaried employment, %	3	5

FINDINGS

- ✓ More males shop for food than females.
- ✓ Most shoppers were household heads and had some level of education.
- ✓ Most female shoppers were engaged in unpaid household work.
- ✓ Most male shoppers were engaged in farming or were self-employed.

WHAT FOOD IS BEING PURCHASED, AND HOW OFTEN?

Figure 3. Frequency of purchase of food items *in the last 12 months*



FINDINGS

- ✓ Shoppers purchased healthy foods (dal, eggs, fish and green leafy vegetables) at least once a week.
  - More male than female shoppers purchased these foods at least once a week.
- ✓ >75% shoppers frequently purchased biscuits.
- ✓ More female (81%) than male (66%) shoppers purchased deep fried foods.

WHAT, WHEN, AND FOR HOW MUCH FOOD WAS PURCHASED?

Table 2. Time of and amount spent for the *most recent* food purchase

	Dal (N=560)	**Eggs** (N=508)	**Fish** (N=545)	**Green leafy vegetables** (N=459)	**Bananas** (N=429)	**Biscuits** (N=532)	**Deep fried foods** (N=400)
Within past 7 days (%)	39.5	66.9	66.8	73.0	35.9	75.4	60.0
Within the past 30 days (%)	45.0	26.4	27.7	20.5	39.4	20.1	29.3
>30 days ago (%)	15.5	6.7	5.5	6.5	24.7	4.5	10.8
Average quantity bought and amount spent on food items during the most recent purchase							
Within past 7 days (%)	0.9 kg *68 BDT*	7 eggs *73 BDT*	1.2 kg *218 BDT*	1.1 kg *25 BDT*	11 bananas *47 BDT*	183 gm *49 BDT*	151 gm *27 BDT*
Within the past 30 days (%)	1.5 kg *125 BDT*	13 eggs *134 BDT*	1.8 kg *308 BDT*	1.0 kg *22 BDT*	10 bananas *41 BDT*	316 gm *98 BDT*	201 gm *37 BDT*
>30 days ago (%)	1.7 kg *140 BDT*	11 eggs *104 BDT*	1.6 kg *247 BDT*	0.9 kg *20 BDT*	9 bananas *55 BDT*	244 gm *68 BDT*	188 gm *49 BDT*

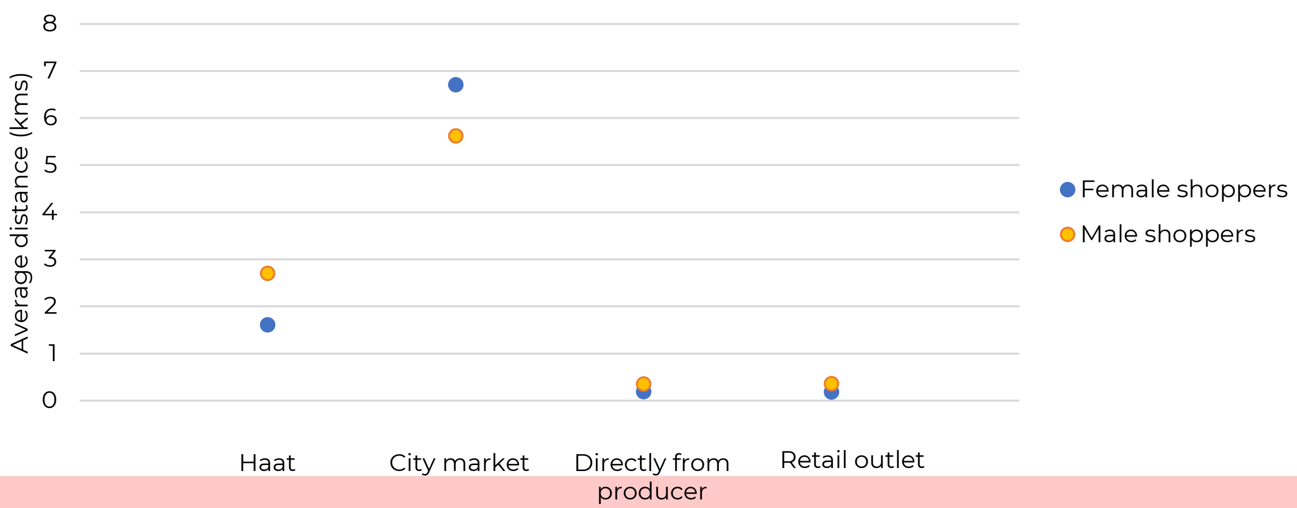
Notes: kg: kilogram; gm: gram; BDT: Bangladeshi Taka

FINDINGS

- ✓ Healthy foods: Most shoppers purchased eggs, fish and green leafy vegetables within the past 7 days.
  - More money was spent on purchasing fish more than any other food item at any time during the most recent purchase.
- ✓ Unhealthy foods: Most shoppers purchased biscuits and deep fried foods within the past 7 days.
  - <100 BDT were spent in purchasing biscuits or deep fried foods at any time during the most recent purchase.

WHERE IS THE FOOD PURCHASED?

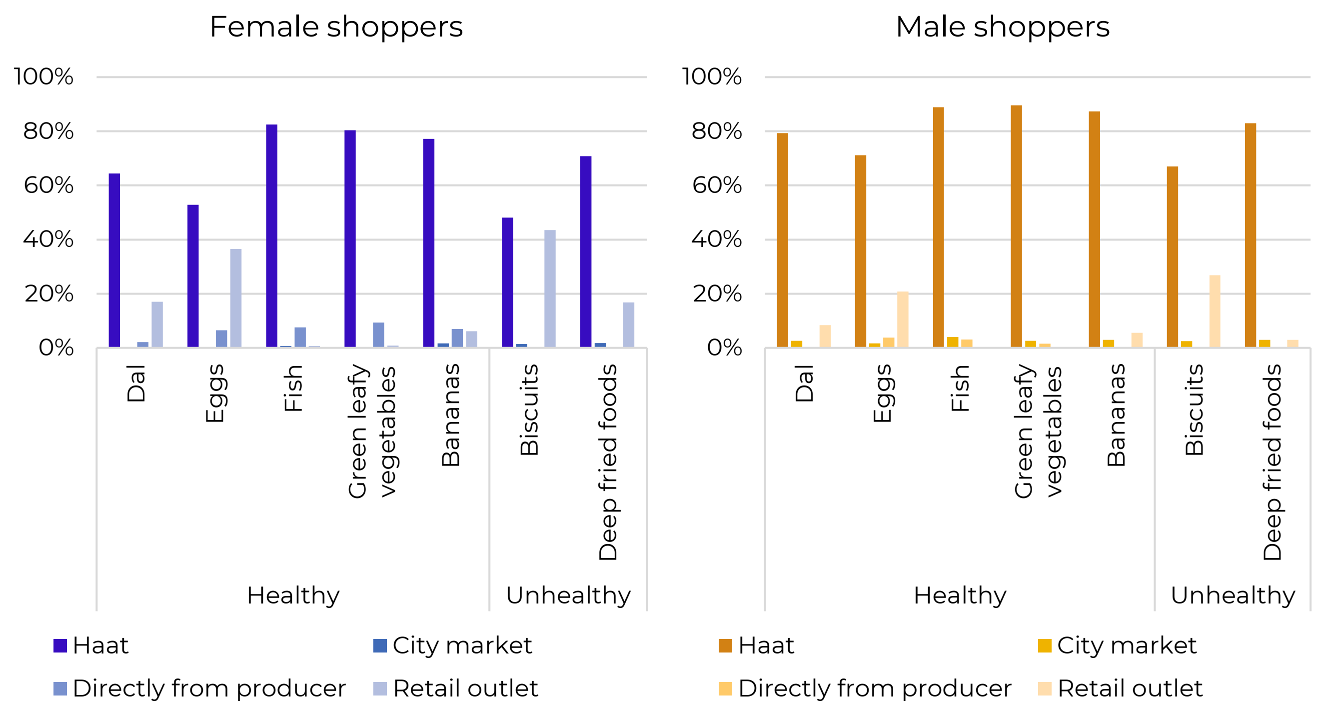
Figure 4. Distance to most recent source of food purchase



FINDINGS

- ✓ Shoppers traveled the farthest to access city markets.
- ✓ >70% shoppers purchased food items from haats whereas <5% purchased from city markets and directly from producers.
- ✓ More female than male shoppers purchased eggs and biscuits from retail outlets.

Figure 5. Sources of most recent food purchases*



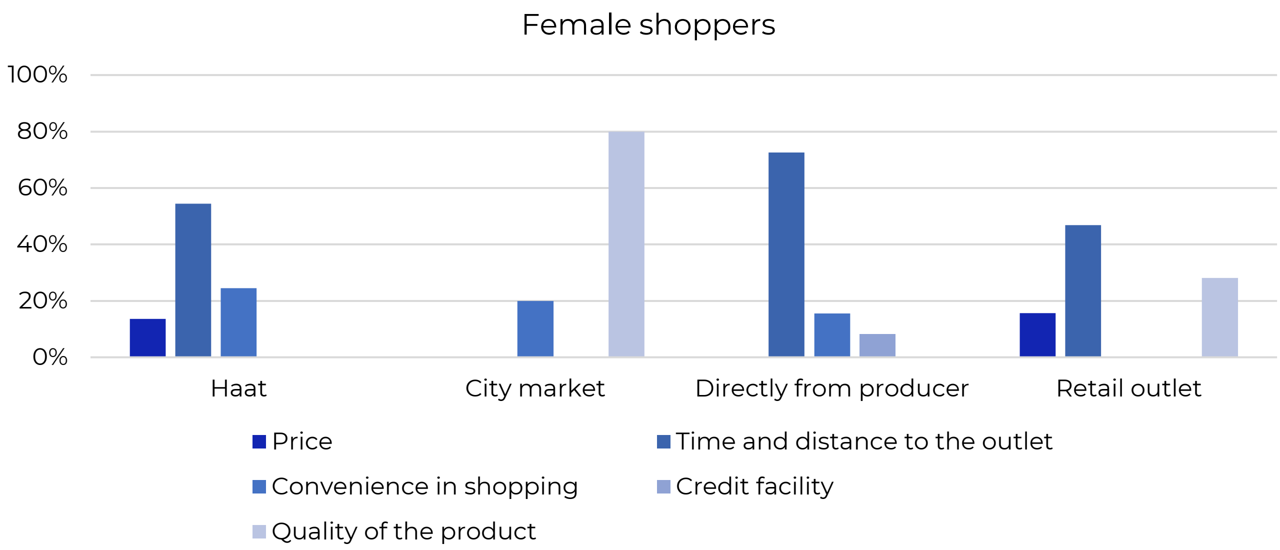
**Note:* *Based on the top sources accessed by the shoppers*

PREFERENCE FOR SOURCES OF FOOD PURCHASES

FINDINGS

- ✓ Female shoppers (54%) cited time and distance whereas male shoppers (41%) cited convenience as a reason for preferring haats.
- ✓ Female shoppers cited quality of the product (80%) whereas male shoppers (43%) cited price as a reason for preferring city markets.
- ✓ Shoppers preferred purchasing from producers and retail outlets because of time and distance.

Figure 6. Reasons for preferring a source of purchase*



******Note: Based on the top three reasons mentioned by the shoppers*

WHY DO THEY PURCHASE DIFFERENT FOODS?

Figure 7. Perceptions of food shoppers (% who agree with each statement)

100%

0%

		Dal	Eggs	Fish	Green leafy vegetables	Banana	Biscuits	Deep fried foods
Know of shop that sells	Female	89	90	78	88	76	96	70
	Male	100	100	100	98	98	100	94
Safe to eat	Female	97	97	98	100	97	76	29
	Male	99	97	98	98	98	80	13
Easy to acquire	Female	82	88	76	92	71	89	60
	Male	92	94	84	93	88	92	77
Affordable	Female	72	68	54	90	62	72	65
	Male	77	76	56	96	77	81	69
Family enjoys	Female	95	98	95	96	95	93	61
	Male	95	99	98	98	97	93	55

FINDINGS

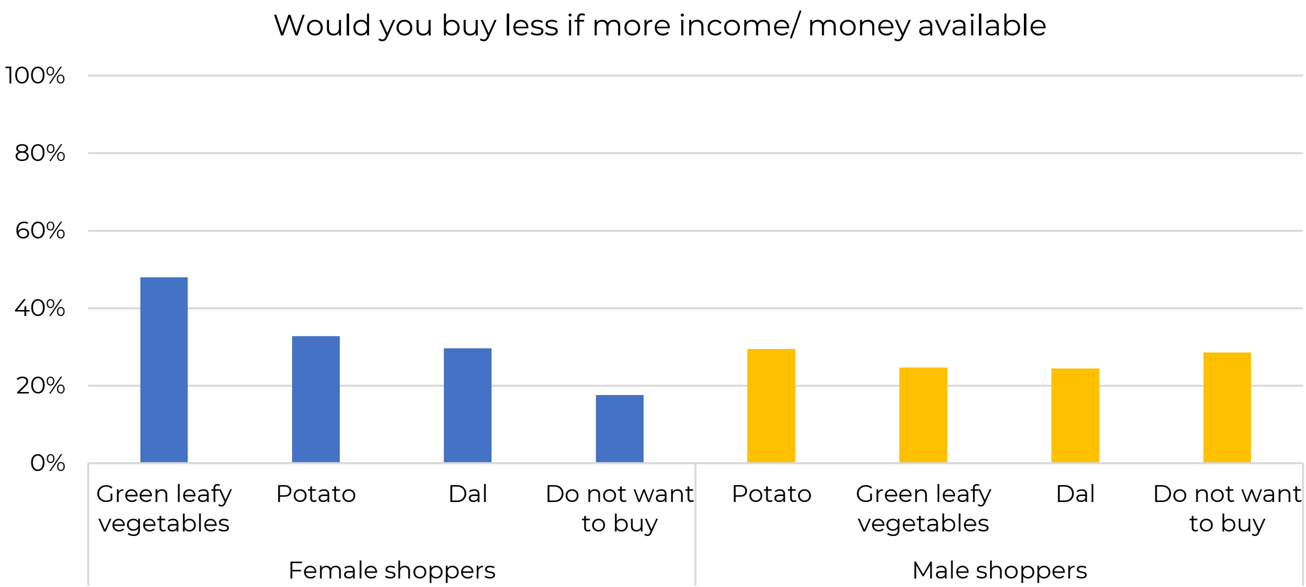
- ✓ Most male shoppers knew of the shops selling food items.
- ✓ Most male shoppers perceived that food items were easy to acquire.
- ✓ Majority shoppers perceived deep fried foods to be unsafe to eat.
- ✓ Most shoppers perceived both healthy and unhealthy food items to be affordable, except fish.

FOOD ASPIRATIONS

Figure 8. Changes to food purchase behavior *if* more disposable income or money were available*

FINDINGS

- ✓ Female and male shoppers aspired to buy more fish, meat and eggs.
- ✓ Female and male shoppers intended to buy less green leafy vegetables, potato and dal.
- ✓ 18% female shoppers and 29% male shoppers did not intend to reduce their purchase of any food.



**Note: Based on the top three food items mentioned by the shoppers*

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Gender-based purchase patterns

- More males than females shopped for food.

What and how often?

- Healthy foods: Shoppers purchased healthy foods frequently.
- Unhealthy foods: Nearly three-quarters of shoppers frequently bought biscuits. More males compared to females never purchased deep fried foods.

Where and why?

- More than 70% shoppers most recently purchased food items from haats.
- Haats were the preferred source of food purchase due to time and distance for female shoppers and convenience for male shoppers.
- Less than 5% shoppers most recently purchased food from city markets.
- Retail outlets were the closest compared to other types of markets.
- Both female and male shoppers had similar perceptions about safety, affordability, and enjoyment of healthy and unhealthy food items.
  - ✓ Most shoppers perceived healthy food items, except fish, to be affordable.
  - ✓ Unhealthy foods were perceived to be enjoyable to eat, easy to acquire, and affordable, but not safe to eat.

What would be done with more access to income/money?

- Shoppers aspired to purchase more fish, meat and eggs and less green leafy vegetables, potatoes and dal.
- Less than a third of shoppers did not intend to buy less of any food.

KEY QUESTIONS FOR ACTION

1. What are the reasons for high frequency purchase of biscuits and deep-fried foods?
2. Can haats, which are the most accessed markets, increase the availability and affordability of healthy food items?
3. What additional information is needed to facilitate actions to improve purchasing behaviors in the district?

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Village and household sampling

We selected 25 villages in the district with a probability proportional to the number of households that reside in each village. Within each village, we conducted a household listing to identify eligible households, that is those with adolescents (10-19 years old). From the households with adolescents, we randomly invited 20 households to participate in the survey. If a household refused, we replaced that household with another randomly selected eligible household, to retain a total of 1,000 households in the district. Thus, the findings reported in this data note are representative of rural households from this district that include an adolescent.

Respondent selection

Within households, one adult female aged 20+ years, one adult male aged 20+ years, and one adolescent aged 10-19 years were selected as the respondents for the survey. When multiple adolescents were living in a household, the oldest adolescent was selected. In some households, an adult male was not available (often due to migration for work). In such households, the female was the only adult respondent (See Table 1 for respondent sample sizes). At the beginning of the interview, the adult in the household primarily involved in agriculture (either male or female) and the adult primarily responsible for food purchasing (either male or female) were identified as the primary respondents.

Photo credit: Abdul Momin

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ABOUT TAFSSA

TAFSSA (*Transforming Agrifood Systems in South Asia)* is a CGIAR Regional Integrated Initiative that supports actions improving equitable access to sustainable healthy diets, that boosts farmers' livelihoods and resilience, and that conserves land, air, and water resources in a climate crisis.

ABOUT CGIAR

CGIAR is a global research partnership for a food secure future. Visit https://www.cgiar.org/research/cgiar-portfolio to learn more about the initiatives in the CGIAR research portfolio