

## **Constraints to Food Security among Low-income Households in Rural Area of Sapele Local Government Area, Delta State**

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### **Abstract**

The study focused on constraints to food security within low-income households in Sapele Local Government Area (LGA), Delta State. Specifically, it determined constraints to food availability and accessibility among households in the area of study. Population was made up of low-income households in the area. Data were collected using questionnaire. Data were analyzed using means. Findings of the study revealed: 15 constraints to food availability and 14 constraints to food accessibility. Some of the constraints to availability of food to households are; household has no land to farm; household has no agricultural input for farming; poor food preservation and storage practices; among others. Some constraints to food accessibility to households are; lack of money/poverty; food is very expensive; food scarcity. It was recommended that government should provide soft loans to farmers, good roads and infrastructures in rural communities. Also efforts should be made to encourage more people especially the youths to go into farming in order to increase food production. This in effect will stimulate the economy, reduce poverty and hunger.

**Keywords:** Households, Food, Availability, Accessibility, Security, Constraints.

### **Introduction**

Food is one of the basic needs of households. Individuals need food to survive. The basic nutrients needed for good health are mostly found in food. It is important that individuals and households have access to daily food requirements in order to live a healthy and productive life. This calls for food security. Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and

economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) 1996). Household food security means that all members of the household, at all times, have access to enough food for an active healthy life (USDA 2008). Four pillars of food security as identified by (FAO 2009); are availability, access, utilization and

stability. This means that when and where there is household food security, food has to be available and accessible to the members to utilize at all times. When there are constraints that disrupt any of the pillars, food insecurity could result. Food insecurity entails limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable food in socially acceptable ways (Bickel *et.al* 2000; FAO 2013). When households are trapped in food insecurity, they become hunger and poor health results. Poor healthy reduces ability work and live a productive healthy life. It is therefore necessary to identify the constraints to household food security and address them appropriately.

In Nigeria, especially among the low-income group, food insecurity remains a bane for households (Shehu 2012). Fakiyes (2011) observed that Nigerian's domestic food supply has been far short of the need of the population. Thus one of the country's greatest challenges is that of feeding her teeming population. According to Jacob (2013), food insecurity exists when people are undernourished as a result of the physical unavailability of food, their lack of social or economic access to adequate food. This is common among low-income households and especially those in the rural areas. Shehu (2012), opined that farming constitutes the major occupation of people in the rural areas in Nigeria.

This situation is typical of many households in Sapele Local Government Area of Delta State. The major occupation of these households is farming which is their major source of

income. However, over dependence on subsistence farming with limited access to farm inputs and working capital, poor extension services and poor post-harvest processing and storage technologies result in food insecurity in this area. It is necessary to evolve ways of enhancing food security in the area. In order to do this, it important to first identify the constraints to food security among households in Sapele Local Government Area, Delta State.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study investigated the constraints to food security among households in Sapele Local Government Area (LGA) of Delta State. Specifically, it determined constraints to food:

1. availability to households in Sapele, Delta State
2. accessibility to households in Sapele, Delta State

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the constraints to food availability in households in Sapale LGA
2. What are the constraints to food accessibility to households in Sapale LGA

### **Methodology**

**Design of the Study:** The research design employed in this study was descriptive survey. It involved questionnaire.

**The Study Area:** The study was conducted in Sapele Local Government Area (LGA), Delta State Nigeria. The study LGA is made up of three districts. The major occupation of households in the area is farming and a few of them engage in fishing due to the presence of

the river Ethiope in the area. Apart from Sapele town, most of the communities are more of a rural settlement that engages also in farming. Sapele market centre in cassava (manioc), fish, palm oil and kernels, yams, and plantains. The major food produced by households are low in price like garri, palm oil, yam etc, while other food stuffs are high in price and most of them are imported into the Local Government Area amid bad roads and high transportation which makes food availability and accessibility a major challenge to households in Sapele town.

**Population for the Study:** The population of this study included low-income of the rural areas households in Sapele district. The district is the most populated area of Sapele Local Government Area, Delta State. These household heads are mostly farmers whose major source of income is from the sales of their farm produce. Homemakers in the households were involved in the study.

**Sample for the Study:** One district (Sapele district) was purposively selected for the study because it is the most populated of the three districts in the LGA. One hundred and fifty low-income households were purposively selected for the study. From each household a homemaker was selected to

form a sample of 150 homemakers for the study.

**Instrument for Data Collection:** The instrument for data collection was questionnaire. It was developed based on literature review and the specific purposes of the study. It had a 4-point scale of Disagree (SD), Strongly Disagree, Agree (A), and (D) Strongly Agree (SA). The instrument was validated by three Universities lecturers of Home Economics.

**Data Collection Techniques:** One hundred and fifty copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the homemakers by hand with the help of three research assistants. One hundred and forty-two (142) copies of the questionnaire were properly responded to and returned. This represented 9.47 per cent return.

**Data Analysis Techniques:** The data for this study were analyzed using mean ( $\bar{X}$ ). The mean of 2.5 was obtained from the responses on the 4-point scale of strongly agree=4, agree=3, disagree =2 and strongly disagree=1. Thus, mean of 2.5 and above ( $\bar{X} \geq 2.5$ ) was considered "Agree", while any mean of less than 2.5 ( $\bar{X} < 2.5$ ) was considered "Disagree". So any item with a mean of 2.5 and above is a constraint, while any with  $\bar{X} < 2.5$  is not a constraint.

## **Findings of the study**

**Table 1: Mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) Responses on the Constraints to Food Availability among Households in Sapele.**

S/N	Possible Constraints to Food Available	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Decision
1	Household has no land to farm	3.3	Agree
2	Household has no agricultural input for farming	2.9	Agree
3	Household not interested in farming	2.7	Agree
4	Household experience crop failure	2.6	Agree
5	Households has no good soil for farming	2.6	Agree
6	Lack of food in the community	2.8	Agree
7	Food theft	2.7	Agree
8	Absence of food in the market	2.5	Agree
9	Natural disaster eg drought, flood, hurricane, wildfire etc	2.9	Agree
10	Communal disturbances, dispute, violence, terrorism, war, etc	3.0	Agree
11	Food wastage	2.9	Agree
12	Poor food preservation and storage practices	3.2	Agree
13	Food spoilage on farm land	3.2	Agree
14	Food hoarding by traders	2.7	Agree
15	Poor/lack of power supply for food processing and preservation	3.5	Agree

Table 1 shows that items 1 to 15 were the mean score of ( $\bar{X} \geq 2.5$ ) 3.3, 2.9, 2.7, 2.6, 2.6, 2.8, 2.7, 2.5, 2.9, 3.0, 2.9, 3.2, 3.2 2.7, and 3.5. This shows they are all constraints to food availability in the area of the study. Each item has mean ( $\bar{X}$  of  $\geq 2.5$ ).

**Table 2: Mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) Responses on the Constraints to Food accessibility among households in Sapele.**

S/N	Possible Constraints to Food Accessibility	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )	Decision
1	Lack of money/poverty	3.6	Agree
2	Food market too far	2.7	Agree
3	Food is very expensive	3.3	Agree
4	Food sealers inflates high prices	2.7	Agree
5	Food scarcity	2.6	Agree
6	Poor access to food production, raw materials and market	3.4	Agree
7	Frequent change in price of food	3.2	Agree
8	Poor market structure	3.2	Agree
9	Enmity between communities settlers	2.9	Agree
10	State of emergency as a result of communal crises	3.0	Agree
11	Laziness	2.6	Agree
12	Presence of robbers, ambush, cattle rustler and kidnappers	3.0	Agree
13	Poor means of food items mobility to market	3.2	Agree
14	Government of impossible of ban on some food items	3.1	Agree

Table 2 shows that items 1 to 14 have the mean scores of ( $\bar{X} \geq 2.5$ ) 3.6, 2.7, 3.3, 2.7, 2.6, 3.4, 3.2, 3.2, 2.9, 3.0, 2.6, 3.0, 3.2, and 3.1. This shows that they are all constraints to food accessibility in the area of the study. So there are 14 constraints to food accessibility ( $\bar{X} \geq 2.5$ ).

### Discussions of Findings

Tables 1 & 2 show that food availability and food accessibility to households are major constraints to food security in Sapele Local Government Area, Delta State. Many factors have been identified as responsible for these constraints.

The mean scores for all the items in Table 1 are more than 2.5 ( $\bar{X} \geq 2.5$ ), therefore, all the items listed on the table are accepted as constraints to food availability in the study area. All these constraints are still lingering in most parts of Nigeria because the government still favours foreign imported goods (Jacob, 2013), like the mean rating for Household has no agricultural input for farming is 2.9, and household has no land to farm rated 3.3; the problem of food availability is partly due to the small size of farm lands cultivated by the farmers (Adebayo, 2012). Land is an important factor of production which helps in the production of goods and services. The mode of land acquisition could determine the scale of farm operation undertaken by the farmers. This is in line with Okon (2017) who reported that there is hope for increasing output by expanding farmland.

Jayne (2005) noted that access to land is a key factor in reducing rural poverty and ensure food security. Other factors responsible for the problem of

food availability are well listed in table 1 and their mean rating ( $\bar{X}$ ) is  $\geq 2.5$  which made them all accepted as constraints to food availability.

Table 2 shows the factors responsible for food accessibility. According to Henneberry and Carrasco (2014), food access is a major dimensions of food security, is a function of income and purchasing power of households. The mean rating of Lack of money/poverty is 3.6, which shows that Income and purchasing power of households is a core problem to food accessibility in Sapele Local Government Area. Like the mean rating for "food is expensive" is 3.3, this is in line with (Federal Ministry of Agriculture, FMA, 2008) who noted that high rates of increase in food prices due to a growing food supply deficit despite food importation has led to food insecurity in Nigeria. The mean rating for all items in Table 2 has shown that food accessibility is determined by various socio-economic, natural and political factors.

The major constraints highlighted in this study are availability and accessibility of Constraint of food security to households in Sapele Local Government Area of Delta State. Thus, it becomes expedient that the government of Delta state should put resources in place to sensitize and support farmers through various credit facilities and infrastructural development.

The contribution of agriculture to economic development lies in making food available and accessible to the rapidly expanding population; increasing the demand for industrial

products rather than local or raw products. Ozor and Nwankwo (2008), reiterated that self-sustained rural community development is vital to the economic and social progress of any community like Sapele Local Government of Delta State and Nigeria at large. In less developed countries, food production dominates the agricultural sector while output expands with increased productivity it increases the income of the farmers.

Therefore, government must put in place infrastructures such as setting a piece of land for agricultural purposes, provision of roads and good transport system to convey farm produces and should make policies that will aid farmers and food sellers to make available and accessible foods to households with an enabling environment where households can easily have access to. So that it can address constraints to food security through availability and accessibility factors.

Government should provide soft loans and subsidies on seeds for farmers, and same for sellers (traders) so that food will be more available and accessible to households. Otherwise, if poverty, lack of infrastructure, modern farming tools are problems. There will be high dependence on importation, which will correspondingly affect food availability thereby causing price increase and threaten food availability for households. This causes major food insecurity for households.

### **Conclusion**

The study examined the two major constraints to food security among

households. It was limited to food availability and accessibility to households in Sapele Local Government Area of Delta State. The study revealed major constraints to food availability and accessibility in Table 1 and 2 these constraints are majorly linked to socio-economic, natural and political factors.

The studied showed a significant effect of food security constraints and needs to be mitigated to save Sapele community from lack of availability and accessibility to food.

Sometimes there are available varieties of farm produce needed by households scarcely in the market. However, until such food stuffs are easily available and accessible to these households, one cannot say there is food security. This is so because no matter the availability of food items in the markets, until they are easily accessible by consumers without having to jump through the hoops, or pay more or do more to have food, there is a serious food problem in that community. The constraints must be removed for food security and safety by government for households.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. Government should provide soft loans to farmers, good roads and infrastructures in rural communities.
2. Efforts should be made to encourage more people especially the youths to go into farming in order to increase food production. This will in effect stimulate the economy, reduce poverty and hunger.

3. Government should check those whose actions that militate against food security in the area of the study and the state as a whole.

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