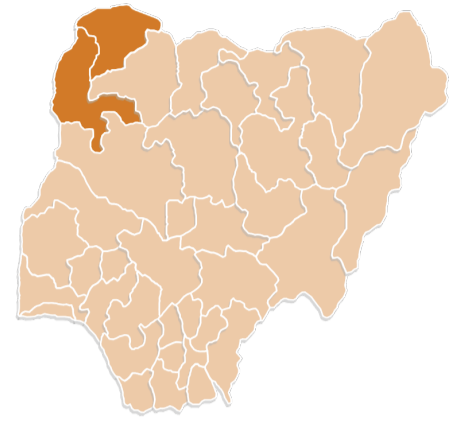



FOOD SAFETY IN TRADITIONAL MARKETS

KNOWLEDGE, BEHAVIORS, AND RISKS

EatSafe aims to improve the safety of nutritious foods in traditional markets.

In Nigeria, [millions of consumers](#) buy food from traditional markets. These open air markets are critical for sustaining vendors' livelihoods and consumers' food security. However, traditional markets in the informal food sector can pose significant food safety risks, particularly for highly nutritious foods (i.e., animal-source foods (ASF) and fresh vegetables). EatSafe's market-based interventions in **North West Nigeria** educate and empower market actors, primarily vendors and consumers, to demand safer foods. Below is a summary of the formative research EatSafe conducted to inform the design of these interventions.


CONSUMER DEMAND

Consumers understand food safety as avoiding contaminated food and properly handling food to prevent illness for themselves or their families.


FOODBORNE ILLNESS

Some consumers report previously getting sick from eating food purchased in traditional markets. Among foodborne hazards, consumers often worried most about the presence of chemicals or insects in or on foods. However, bacterial contamination is actually the primary cause of foodborne illness, and EatSafe seeks to address this misperception.

USE OF CUES FOR DECISION-MAKING



Consumers use cues, or shorthand signals, to make purchasing decisions. Generally, people rely on their senses to determine how safe foods are.



CUES CONSUMERS USE TO CHOOSE FOODS



| | | | | |
|-----------|-------|--------|-----------|--------|
| Freshness | Price | Safety | Nutrition | Health |
|-----------|-------|--------|-----------|--------|

CUES CONSUMERS USE TO CHOOSE VENDORS

| | | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------|---------|
| Vendor Cleanliness | Stall Cleanliness | Product Quality | Price | Service |
|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------|---------|

VENDOR RELATIONSHIPS

Consumers generally trust vendors to source and sell safe foods in the market. However, **4 in 5 consumers feel that some vendors care more about food safety than others.**

VENDOR PRACTICES

Vendors' main concern about food safety is how contaminated foods could impact business.

PROCURING SAFE FOOD

Vendors are confident in their ability to identify suppliers of safe food. Most indicate they would spend more time and money to ensure the food they sold was safe.

VISIBLE FOOD SAFETY PRACTICES

While vendors acknowledge that visible hygiene and food safety practices are important to consumers, their knowledge about safe food practices may not translate to behavior.

20%

had food handling tools (e.g., tongs)

>90%

touched food and money with the same bare hands

60%

reported covering foods



12%

displayed foods with coverings



ASF vendors sometimes used the same tools to handle raw and cooked foods. Most shops did not have high-risk foods in contact with lower-risk foods like grains and fresh vegetables.

Food waste was often left on the ground, but **50% of shops use bags or bins to collect food waste.**

GENDER CONSIDERATIONS

Male consumers tend to make quicker purchasing decisions, while women are more discerning and spend more time shopping and asking questions.

“Most women don't have the freedom and time that men do. Businesses require getting supply and then selling it. You have to move from one place to another, which most women don't have [the] privilege [to do].”

Female vendors were rare, concentrated in certain foods, and often selling at smaller volumes. They reported both social norms and physical obstacles to vending (e.g., heavy loads, remote areas).



FOOD SAFETY RISKS

Consumers could be exposed to a very high risk of foodborne illness from a variety of nutritious foods purchased at traditional markets.

EatSafe in Nigeria's key commodities are beef, fish, fresh leafy vegetables, soybeans, cowpea, rice, and maize.

Despite the documented risks of bacterial contamination, only a minority of vendors and consumers surveyed at traditional markets in Kebbi perceived any of EatSafe's key commodities as high risk.




ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Improving food safety at the market level requires thoughtful stakeholder engagement and policy advocacy.

Reviews of local and national [policies on food safety](#) find a promising landscape to focus on food safety in traditional markets in Nigeria.

While there are many “[food safety champions](#)” in Nigeria, there are no consumer associations that promote food safety in traditional markets.




RESEARCH METHODS

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| <h3>SURVEYS</h3> <p>Cross-sectional surveys with consumers and vendors; observations of a subset of vendors.</p> | <h3>INTERVIEWS</h3> <p>In-depth interviews and focus group discussions with consumers and vendors.</p> | <h3>HAZARD REVIEWS</h3> <p>Review of foodborne hazards in Nigeria; microbial field sampling and analysis.</p> | <h3>ETHNOGRAPHY</h3> <p>Semi-structured interviews using cognitive mapping tools with consumers and vendors.</p> | <h3>ADVOCACY ANALYSIS</h3> <p>Stakeholder mapping and engagement; policy recommendations with institutional mapping</p> |
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For additional information, contact EatSafe@gainhealth.org or visit gainhealth.org/EatSafe.

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