

COVID-19 Traditional Market Report

- In Brief -

Issue 1: January 2021, Abuja, Nigeria

The monthly Traditional Market Report (TMR) tracks the behaviors and daily decisions being made by vendors and consumers in Utako and Gosa markets serving consumers from all income ranges in Abuja. In addition to summarizing perceptions on COVID-19 and the hazard it poses to market actors in these two traditional and popular markets, the TMR tracks prices of selected nutritious foods over time. The report provides a baseline assessment of accepted indicators that help determine the resilience of market actors as they cope with business and food security choices under COVID-19.

The assessment is based on a panel of vendors (n=30) and consumers (n=32) from Utako and Gosa market who will be followed up on monthly basis via phone interviews; these results are based on data gathered in January 2021.

Insights from vendor perspective:

- 93% of vendors stated that the pandemic had an immediate impact on their business.
- 67% of vendors reported a decrease in the number of customers in the last 9 months and sell to 16-50 customers on a typical day.
- 40% of vendors found it somewhat difficult and 27% very difficult to follow new COVID rules in the market (including social distancing, wearing of face mask, hand washing/sanitizing and temperature checks when entering the market).
- 33% of vendors stated to have started sharing resources with other vendors including sanitizers, masks, suppliers, and hand washing facilities.
- 53% of vendors have borrowed money from relatives, friends, and other businesses due to COVID-19.
- 17% of vendors are aware of business trainings being offered by market authorities due to COVID-19.

Insights from consumer perspective:

- 88% of consumers interviewed said their household has been financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (loss/reduction of income or increase in basic costs for foods and services).
- 37% of consumers made changes to the food they typically buy; 80% of those that made changes decreased the quantity of rice, beans, and meat they purchase.
- 31% of consumers recognized changed marketing strategies of vendors in the last 9 months including personal interaction, additional discount, and advertisement.
- 16% of consumers have been asked for feedback by vendors and/or market officials in the last 9 months.

Food Prices:

- Food prices for pulses and eggs have increased between Dec20-Jan21 (soya beans +15%; eggs +2%) but prices decreased for vegetables (tomatoes -15%; carrots -4%) and remained stable for meat, poultry, and fish.

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Abuja, Nigeria

January 2021

Background on COVID-19 situation in the country and municipality

As of mid-February 2021, Nigeria's national COVID-19 daily infection rate witnessed decreases in daily new cases after a significant and sustained rise between December 2020 and mid-January 2021 across all zones of the country (Figure 1).

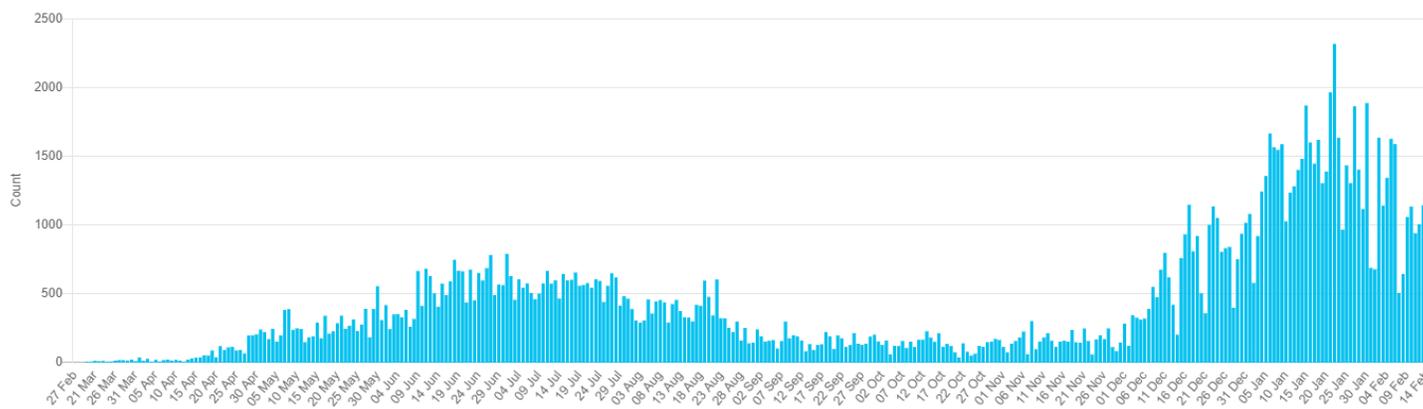


Figure 1. Confirmed daily COVID-19 cases in Nigeria (NCDC, 15th February 2021).

Out of the 1,441,013 samples tested for COVID-19 by 15 February 2021, 146,184 cases have been confirmed positive with 1,752 deaths recorded by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). Of all territories in Nigeria, Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), had the second highest incidence of confirmed cases (18,552) and deaths (137). To underscore the government's concern, the Federal Government of Nigeria signed an executive order in January 2021, re-emphasizing the national preventive mechanism including specific legal sanctions against defaulters. In response, there has been a marked improvement in compliance with the preventive measures in public places as demonstrated by the number of people wearing face masks and private enterprise that have established measures within their premises. However, compliance with the guidelines is still inconsistent, including improper mask wearing and regular exchange of used face masks that is especially visible within major cities and state capitals.

To address rising daily infection rates in the last two months, development agencies and other private entities, in coordination with government, are rolling out various Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) programs aimed at improving community awareness and addressing some misconceptions hindering compliance. At the beginning of the pandemic, most people thought that the government's effort was appropriate and effective. Right now, this notion has changed, resulting in lower compliance, which the new SBCC programs are designed to address. In addition, the leadership of major private and public economic enterprises, like marketplaces, shopping malls and parks, have set up monitoring stations as their entry points. Individuals coming to these market or public places without a face mask are requested to wear one or are asked to turn back immediately if unable to procure one at the gates. In addition,



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government agencies have established sanitation and temperature monitoring points at designated locations, including marketplaces. In the last few days, government agencies have stepped up enforcement through the constitution of mobile courts to prosecute violators; business owners risk having their premises closed if found in breach of safety requirements.

Market characteristics and changes due to COVID-19

Utako market and **Gosa market** are both located in the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), two of eleven markets in the area (Figure 2). Both markets are in an urban environment and mainly offer food products. Both markets sell a range of different food products including grains, fruits and vegetables, dairy, meat, poultry, and fish, but also fats and oil, eggs, legumes, and seeds.

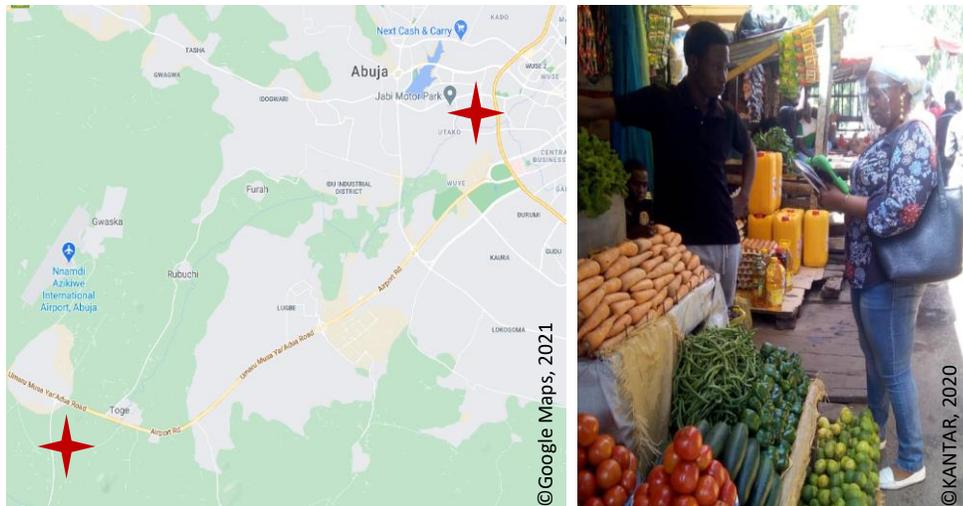


Figure 2. Location of Utako and Gosa market in Abuja, Nigeria (left); Utako market, Abuja, Nigeria (right).

Utako Market, Abuja

Utako market is a semi open-air market and is well connected to farms where fresh produce is transported on well-established roads. Easy vendor access to food products leads to lower costs for vendors in the Utako market. The market operates daily but has its major market day on Saturdays. According to the market association, the number of shops and open stalls is about 2,200 with about 4,500-6,000 vendors operating in the market daily. About 10,000-12,000 customers go to the market each day, mainly from surrounding neighborhoods in Abuja.

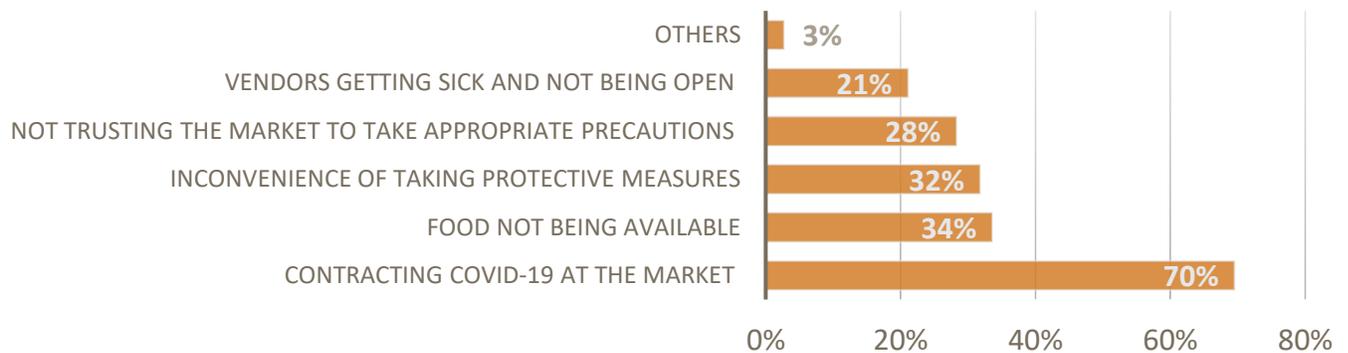
Gosa Market, Abuja

Gosa market is an open-air market near the Nnamdi Azikiwe airport and a major food market in the area for both wholesale and retail. While it is slightly south of the city center, it is a major hub also for traders and customers from other provinces and states in Nigeria. While the market is open every day, the major market day is Friday when most wholesale transactions are conducted with traders from neighboring provinces and states. According to the market association, the market has a capacity of about 1,500-2,500 vendors and about 5,000 customers daily. This number increases to about 7,000 customers on Fridays.

Bi-Weekly Consumer and Vendor Survey Results under COVID-19

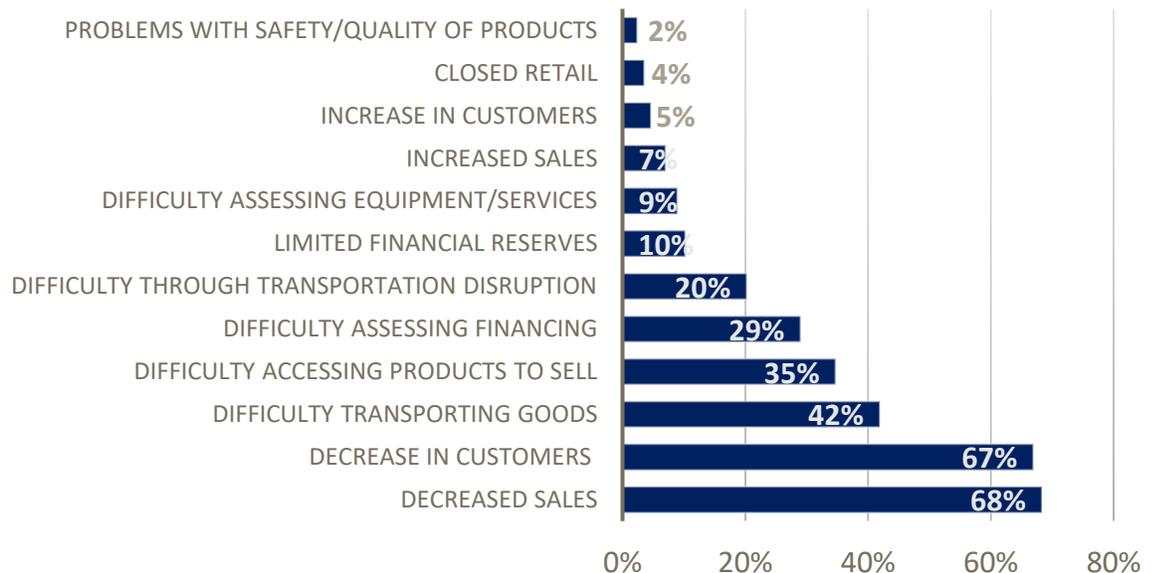
In addition to the assessment of resilience, a rapid COVID-19-assessment of 40 consumers and 40 vendors from each market started in October 2020 and has been repeated every two weeks. Results below are from both markets. Based on the rapid assessment, 44% of consumers reported concerns when shopping in the market in the last couple of weeks. Those with concerns identified the following issues: (1) fear of contracting COVID-19 (70%), (2) food unavailability (34%) and (3) the inconvenience of taking protective measures (32%).

Consumers: Greatest concerns when shopping at the market in the last 2 weeks



Most consumers (57%) had observed changes in the markets due to COVID-19, mostly stating the set-up of washing facilities or hand sanitizer (61%), the mandate to all consumers (48%) and vendors to wear face masks (41%), and the thorough cleaning of markets with disinfectant (39%).

Vendors: Immediate impact on business due to COVID-19



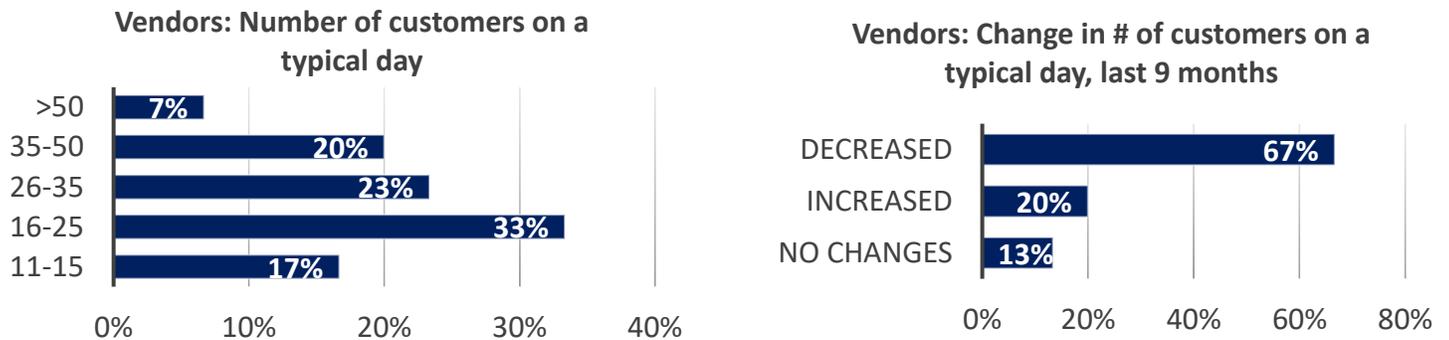
Almost all vendors (93%) interviewed in the bi-weekly assessments stated that the pandemic had an immediate impact on their business. About two thirds of vendors stated that they experience decreased sales and customers, while 42% had difficulties transporting goods, (35%) accessing product to sell and (29%) difficulty to access financing.

Market Resilience under COVID-19

Data for this assessment round (1) were collected between 11th – 22nd of January 2021 from 30 vendors and 32 consumers in both the Utako and Gosa markets. Food prices for this report have been assessed on the 7th of December 2020, 8th and 26th of January.

Connectivity

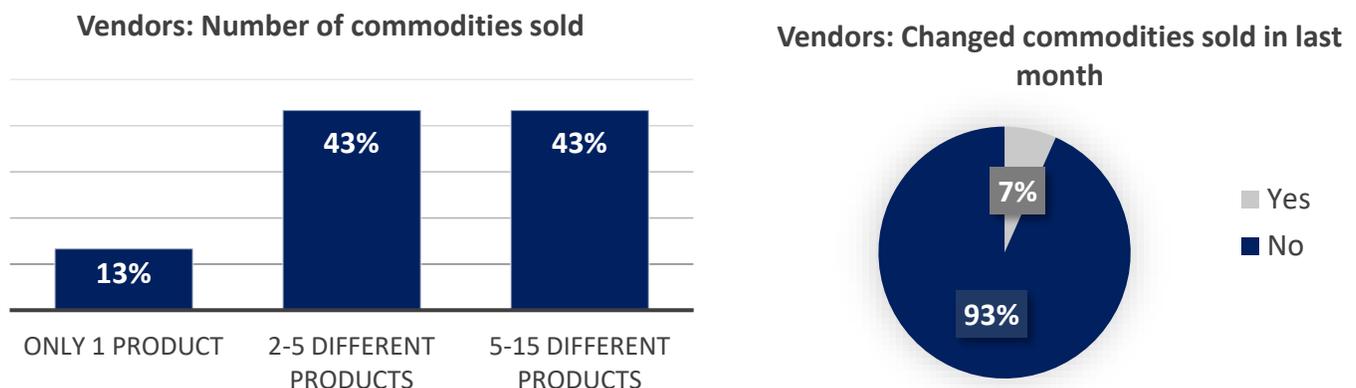
Connectivity includes not only the extent of connections vendors or other market actors might have but also the relationships between connected actors. Too many or too few connections can hamper the capacity to generate or sustain the growth of the market system. In this panel, over one third of the 30 vendors included reported between 16-25



customers on a typical day. Most vendors reported 2 to 5 suppliers for their business. Almost 70% of the vendors reported experiencing a decrease in the number of customers in the last 9 months, i.e., the time since COVID-19 has been present in the area, and 17% of vendors reported a change in the number of suppliers in the last month.

Diversity

Diversity has multiple dimensions, including (1) the amount of variation in a system and (2) the balance between different types (e.g., types of products, firm sizes, marketing channels, or end markets) or market system composition, (i.e., how



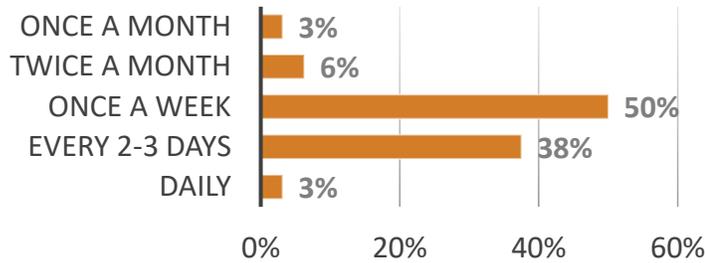
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aspects of a market system are related to each other). Equal numbers of vendors sold between two and five (43%) or five to 15 (43%) commodities in their businesses. Only about 7% of vendors (n=2) reported changing the commodities sold in

their business in the last month and the major reasons named for this has been an increase in supply and seasonality.

Consumers: Frequency of visiting the market

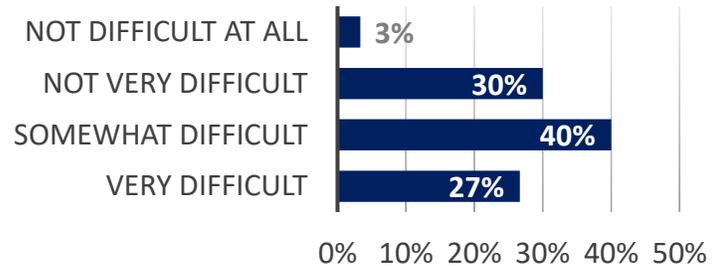


Most interviewed consumers (n=32) went shopping in the market at least once per week (50%) or every 2-3 days (38%). About 94% of the consumers said the purpose for visiting the market has been to buy foods or other goods for themselves or the own family; about 16% of consumers also went to the market to buy foods or other goods for relatives that are unable to go shopping.

Equity and fairness

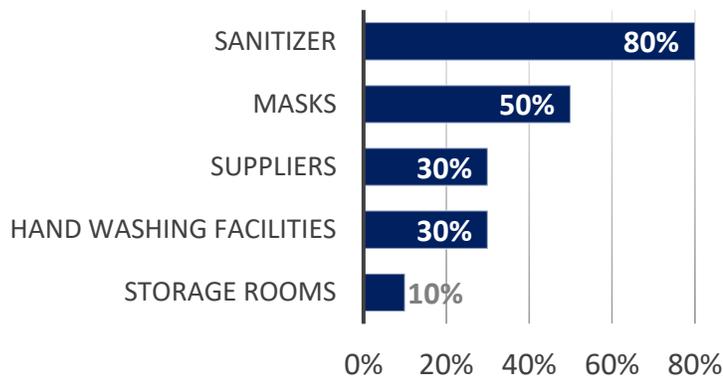
From a systems perspective, **equity and fairness** refers to the level or degree of equality and fairness inherent in formal and informal rules and laws. In our assessment we asked the panel of vendors how difficult it was for them to follow the new rules and regulations put in place due to COVID-19. The analysis revealed that most vendors found it either somewhat difficult (40%) or even very difficult (27%) to follow new rules including social distancing, wearing a face mask, and performing hand sanitizing and temperature checks when entering the market space.

Vendors: Difficulty following COVID rules



Cooperation

Vendors: Resources shared with other vendors

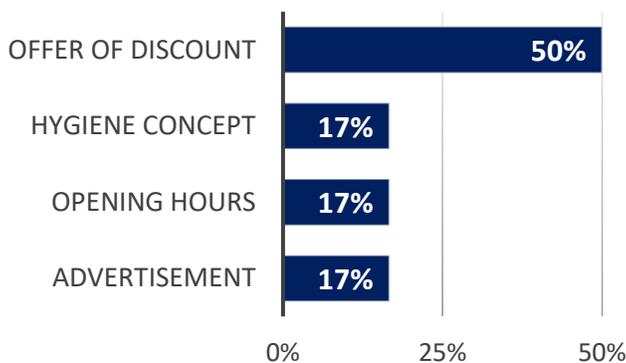


Cooperation refers to market actors collaborating to achieve a common purpose or function. Cooperation is neither good nor bad and the contribution of cooperation depends on the purpose. Here cooperation was measured asking vendors if they have started sharing resources with other businesses due to COVID-19. While most vendors (67%) stated that they did not share resources with other businesses, those that shared resources (n=10) mainly shared sanitizers (80%) and masks (50%) with other vendors.

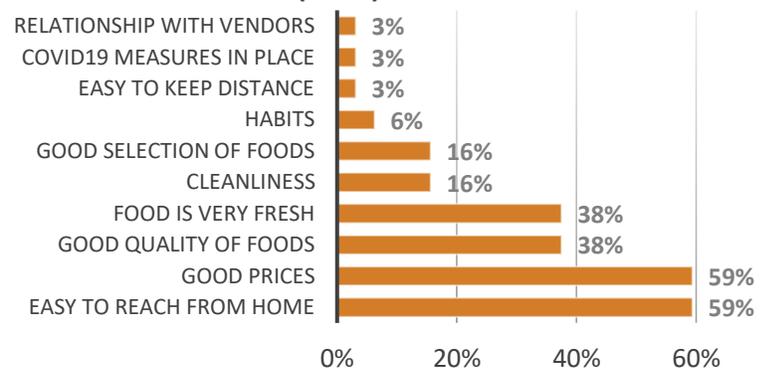
Competition

Competition is defined as rivalry between two or more entities. Like cooperation, competition can be negative or positive. Its contribution to system resilience capacities depends on how and why the entities are competing. Competition in this assessment has been measured based on changing vendors practices based on what they had seen at competitors.

Vendors: Changed business practices due to competitors (n=6)

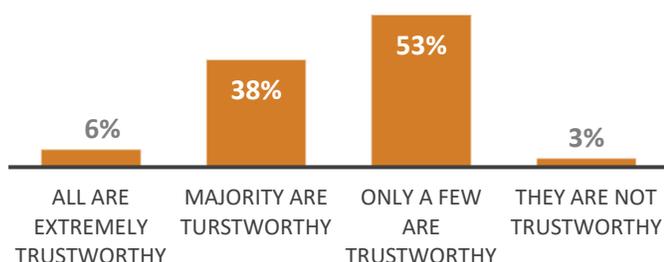


Consumers: Reasons for buying at the market (n=27)

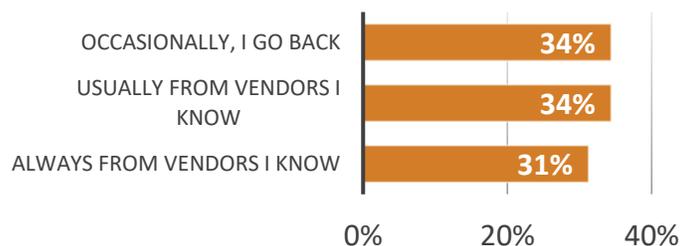


Most of the vendors in this panel (80%) reported they had not changed their own business practices based on competitors. Those vendors that reported a business practice change due to competitors (n=6) mainly added the offer of a discount, or made changes to hygiene, advertising, or opening hours. Almost 80% of consumers reported they did most of their food shopping at the market. Reasons for buying food at the market were due to easy access from home (59%) and good prices (59%); two measures linked to food were also popular reasons, quality (38%) and freshness of food (38%). The majority of consumers (53%) said they only consider a few of their regular vendors trustworthy while 38% said most vendors are trustworthy. This discrepancy in trust might also explain a rather diverse picture in terms of vendor loyalty. About one third visited the same vendor occasionally (34%), another third went usually (34%), while 31% said they always visit the same vendors.

Consumers: Level of trust for the vendors you buy food from



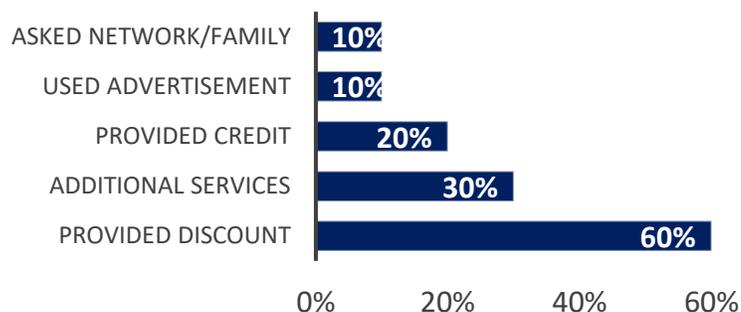
Consumers: Frequency of visiting the same vendor when buying at the market



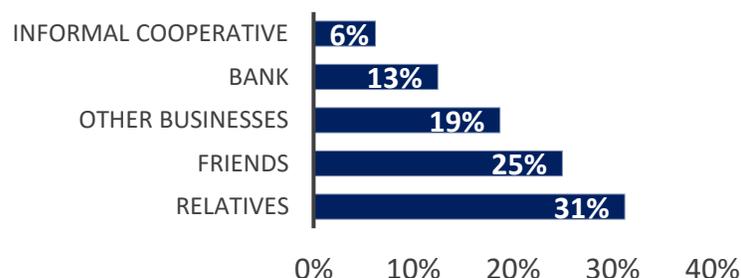
Business strategy

Business practices are oriented toward generating value for customers. They can be investments in understanding customers, in building customer relationships, in tracking customer retention and growth, in investing in staff and firm capacity, and in merit-based hiring.

Vendors: Types of business strategies taken, last month (n=10)

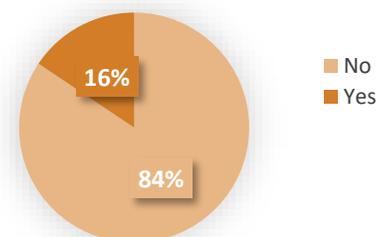


Vendors: Source of borrowed money due to COVID-19 (n=16)



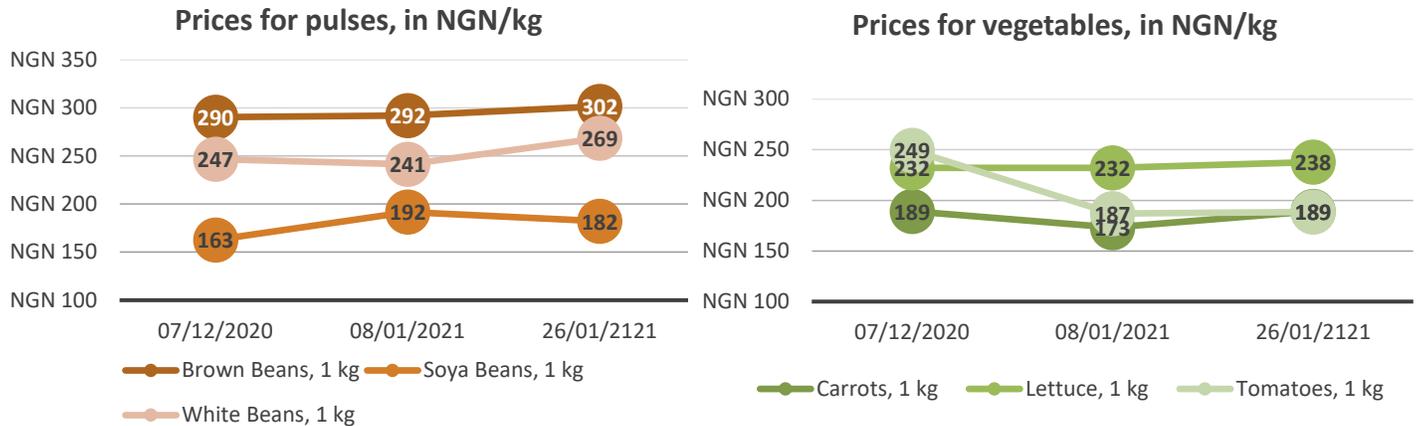
One third of vendors have used a business strategies to increase the number of customers and sales during the last month. Those vendors using business strategies identified the following strategies: discounting prices; adding services; and using credit. Over 50% of vendors also reported borrowing money to pay for any unexpected expenses due to COVID-19. The sources for this money were diverse; vendors relied on relatives, friends, other businesses and banks. Besides the strategies deployed and money borrow due to COVID-19, only about 17% of vendors were aware of business training or support that the market offered due to COVID-19. Similarly only a small portion of consumers (16%) said they have been asked by market officials or vendors to provide feedback and, of those, (n=5) none report that their suggestions have been addressed or taken on board.

Consumers: Asked for feedback by market officials or vendor

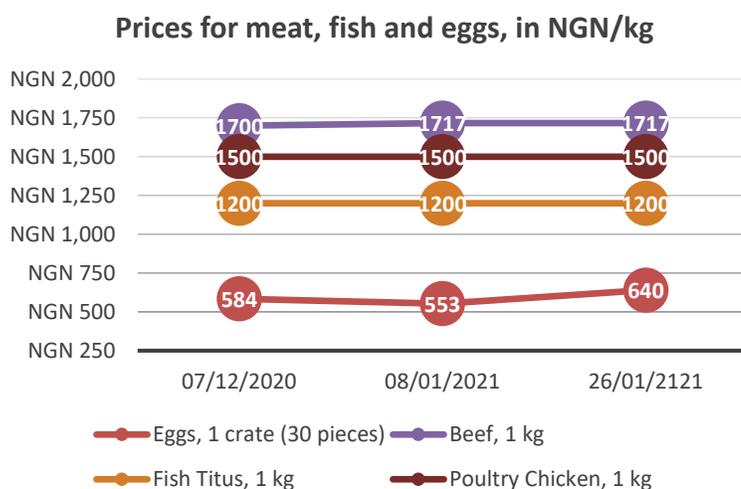


Food prices

Tracking food prices is of great value to any market system to respond quickly to any dynamics in the food system. In this assessment, prices of different nutritious commodities and food groups have been tracked over time. Between mid-December 2020 and January 2021 (average of both assessments taken for percentage change), the food prices for pulses



(brown beans, white beans, and soya beans,) increased between 2%, 3% and 15%, respectively. Out of the assessed types of pulses 1 kg of brown beans had the highest price with 302 NGN/kg (~0.78 US\$/kg) in mid-January 2021. Although the monthly food prices collected for the [Consumer Price Index \(CPI\) by the National Bureau of Statistics](#) (NBS) display higher prices for brown beans in the state of Abuja (373 NGN/kg in January 2021) and a price fluctuation of 5% between months, the assessments seem comparable. Vegetable prices for this report were assessed from carrots, lettuce, and tomatoes. Prices decreased for tomatoes (-25%) and carrots (-4%) between mid-December 2020 and January 2021. The official statistics confirm this decreased with a slightly higher price decrease for tomatoes (-30%) between the respective months. In general, out of the vegetables assessed for this report, highest prices were seen for lettuce, with a price of 238 NGN/kg (~0.62US\$/kg) in mid- January 2021.



For animal source foods (ASF), prices for fresh fish (Titus), beef, chicken and eggs were assessed. While the price for a crate of eggs increased slightly by 2% between mid-December and January, food prices for all other ASF remained almost staple. While the official statistics for Abuja state show a slightly higher increase in prices for eggs (3.8%), the other ASF's price changes are very comparable. Overall, the price per kg in the underlying assessment was the highest for beef which costs 1,717 NGN/kg (~4.46 US\$/kg) in mid-January.



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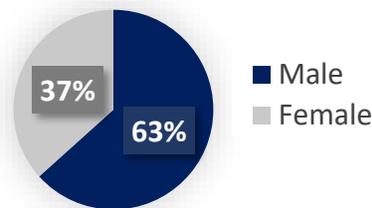
Besides the prices assessed here the national statistic for Abuja state highlights a substantial monthly increase in the prices for plantain (unripe) (17%), onion (12%) and tinned milk (6%). A decrease in prices can further be observed in broken rice (Ofada) (-7%), and yams (-6%). Overall, the [CPI on foods](#) for urban areas in Nigeria increased by 1.9% between December 2020 and January 2021.

Characteristics of respondent sample

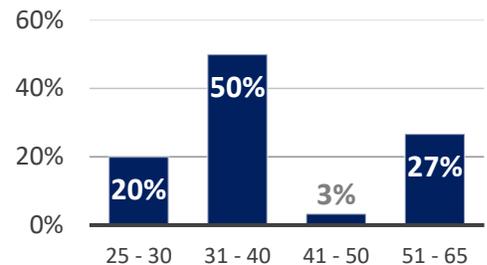
Vendor (n=30)

- 63% of the vendors in this panel are male.
- The panel has a diverse age range.
- 50% of vendors have not attended school, 23% have primary education, 27% secondary or higher education.
- Most vendors sell grains and vegetables.
- 77% of vendors have been operating in the market for 5 years or longer and 90% of vendors aim to continue with their business even if COVID-19 continues.

Vendors: Gender profile of panel



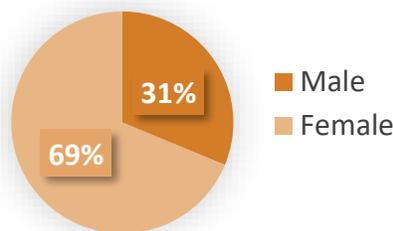
Vendors: Age in years



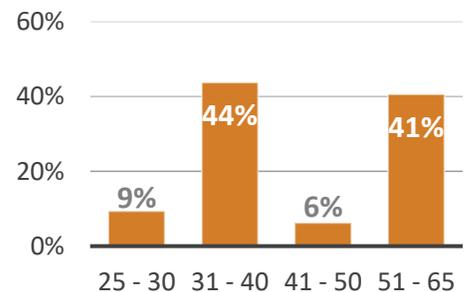
Consumer (n=32)

- 69% of the consumers in this panel are female.
- Most consumers are in the age groups 31-40 or 51-65 years of age.
- 53% of consumers had attended secondary education; 44% have attended primary school.

Consumers: Gender profile of panel



Consumers: Age in years



Methods assessing market characteristics under COVID-19, resilience and food prices

Insights into **resilience** have been based on interviews of 33 consumers and 32 vendors from two informal markets in Abuja, who were interviewed between 11th – 22nd of January 2021. After data cleaning, market systems resilience was analyzed of 32 consumers and 30 vendors. The panel of vendors and consumers was purposefully selected from Utako and Gosa market in Abuja in December 2020 and based on the respondent's gender and age profiles, which were previously assessed in the rapid assessments in both markets (see below). The same panel of consumers and vendors are followed up each month via phone interviews, using a structured questionnaire.

Based on the [USAID Market System Resilience Framework](#), market system resilience is defined as “...the ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth.” For market systems, resilience further includes the ability to allocate resources, draw on optimal resources, and innovate to solve problems in the face of shocks and stresses. While the USAID framework highlights eight domains to characterize resilience capacities, this rapid assessment includes questions on six of the eight domains (connectivity, diversity, equity and fairness, cooperation, competition, business strategy) with fast and slow indicators.

Besides data on resilience this report uses data assessed through a **rapid assessment** from 400 consumers and 400 vendors from both Utako and Gosa market. Approximately every two weeks, 40 consumer and 40 vendors are randomly selected and surveyed in each traditional market. Surveys are conducted with complete adherence to global guidelines on COVID-19 prevention and control. Data included in this report (Chapter “Market characteristics and changes due to COVID-19”) have been collected between 6th of October 2020 and 8th of January 2021.

For all assessments, combined responses from the vendors and consumers in both markets are used. All data were collected via Open Data Kit (ODK) collect and stored on KoBo Toolbox; data analysis was done using Stata version 14.

Food prices are collected bi-weekly from each market for selected nutritious foods of four different food groups. Prices for this report have been assessed on the 7th of December 2020, 8th and 26th of January 2021. The selection of assessed commodities is based on the nutritive value, the availability and cultural acceptance of the food items. All food prices are displayed as average price for both markets and each data assessment point in standard units (kg or crate) in NGN (400 NGN \triangleq 0.97 US\$). For each round and food item, three comparative prices from three different vendors in each market are collected by trained enumerators at similar times and days of the week. The weight of foods being sold in their usual units has been previously assessed and average weights for standard units have been calculated. Although not all of the assessed commodities might be comparable to the official prices of the monthly CPI food prices in Abuja state, for each of the rounds we compare the assessed prices to the official statistics to get some comparative results.

Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) COVID-19 Response

The necessary COVID-19 lockdowns have placed a spotlight on the weaknesses of food systems across the world. In the COVID-19 context the single most important thing that can be done for the health and resilience of people and economies is to protect the nutritional status of current and future generations. GAIN has developed the [Keeping Food Markets Working \(KFMW\) program](#) as an emergency response to the COVID-19 crisis, providing rapid support to food system



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workers, to small and medium enterprises supplying nutritious foods, and to keeping fresh food markets open. While disease control responses to the pandemic are essential, they also disrupt food systems, depress income, and put a strain on social protection programs, which can threaten the nutritional status of the most vulnerable. The KFMW program is focused on mitigating those risks and keeping affordable nutritious foods flowing in African and Asian markets to the people who most need it. The KFMW program consists of five workstreams:

1. Building resilience of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
2. Maintaining and reinforcing efforts in Large-Scale Food Fortification
- 3. Ensuring food markets stay open and are operating safely**
4. Investing in nutrition security for key workers in the food system
5. Supporting effective policymaking and coordination during the pandemic

Through KFMW, EatSafe is working to better understand the rapidly changing situation in traditional food markets from the vendor and consumer perspective under workstream 3.

EatSafe data collection for municipalities

EatSafe: Evidence and Action Towards Safe, Nutritious Food, is a five-year project aiming to enable lasting improvements in the safety of nutritious foods in traditional markets by focusing on the consumer. The COVID-19 pandemic has plunged the world into an unprecedented global health crisis. Difficult to manage at the best of times, traditional markets are generally crowded with customers and vendors creating ideal conditions for transmission of the virus. When market vendors and other food system workers cannot do their jobs, increased food prices and/or food shortages are likely to result in reducing demand for fresh, nutritious foods and eroding market resilience. Furthermore, real, and perceived risks can undermine consumer trust in the health and safety of food markets.

EatSafe's COVID-19 response is working to better understand the rapidly changing situation in traditional food markets from the vendor and consumer perspective. Through bi-weekly market surveys and monthly key informant interviews, EatSafe is assessing the accessibility of safe nutritious food, availability of health and safety information and the resilience of traditional markets. EatSafe will continue to use and disseminate results to help ensure food markets remain open, that safe, nutritious food is available under COVID-19 and to support future programming for safe and resilient nutritious food markets.

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