

Practitioners' perspectives on improving ready-to-eat food vending in urban Nigeria: a practice-based visioning and back-casting approach

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In many parts of the world, food consumption is shifting from mostly home-based to out-of-home due to transforming everyday lives as a result of urban development and changing infrastructure. This trend has spurred the expansion of informal ready-to-eat food vending particularly among the urban poor. However, there are many concerns about the safety and diversity of food purchased through ready-to-eat food vending. This paper explores strategies, suggestions and empirical evidence on how the provisioning of healthy and diverse food in informal ready-to-eat food vending can be improved in urban Nigeria. A social practice-oriented approach combined with participatory future visioning and back-casting was employed in a multi-phase process of interlinked focus group discussions and workshops involving key food sector stakeholders. The findings reveal that increasing diversity of the food provisioned and integrating fruits and vegetables in meals is a starting point to improve dietary health. This requires changing food norms and promoting sensitization to the importance of diverse diets through training initiatives involving primary actors. Furthermore, transforming skills, materials resources, and capital as well as addressing the relationships between food vending and other food-related provisioning practices within the food vending environment are essential components of transitioning to healthier and more diverse food provisioning in the informal food vending sector. Our findings provide insights for policymakers to provide strategic pathways for practical interventions to improve food vending practices that meet the food security and nutritional needs of the urban poor.