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Title Regular consumption of fruits and vegetables in East Africa: An illustration from Uganda

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Abstract

East Africa is fairly heterogeneous region in terms of climate and topography, and Uganda has natural conditions suitable to produce a range of tropical and temperate fruits and a variety of vegetables. In urban areas, such as Kampala, there are several types of retail outlets, and in outlying areas, vegetables, fruits and other foods are available primarily at local open air markets. Observations suggest that many there also have gardens and raise their own vegetables. Despite the possibilities many in Uganda do not consume adequate volume of vegetables and eat fruit seldom depending on seasonal fruits available in the area. The objective of the paper is to analyze the self-reported regular consumption of selected fruits and vegetables by Ugandan households. Fruits and vegetables are important in the Ugandan diet because for many households, cooked vegetables are the core ingredient of the main meal of the day and are served with the groundnut sauce. Fruit, outside Kampala, is mostly grown in household gardens or collected in the wild. Uganda has a very mild climate and numerous fruits are accessible including papaya, oranges, pineapple, mangos, and sweet bananas. The domestic food market is expected to grow due to the rising per capita incomes and foreign supermarket chains have already positioned themselves in Kampala. The data were collected from 1641 respondents residing in Kampala, the capital city, and four towns in northern and eastern provinces, including Gulu, Lira, Soroti, and Mbale. The survey involved face-to-face interviews were conducted between April and June 2011. The questionnaire was tested in a pilot study in October 2010, but did not required substantive changes. The debriefing suggested, however, that care needed to be exercised in posing questions. The survey instrument required translation into local languages depending on the area. The survey was implemented first in Kampala and then in the provinces. Financial constraints prevented the implementation of the survey in other parts of the country. Respondents shared information about their and the household characteristics. They also responded to questions probing for food shopping habits, food preparation and regularly consumed foods. Because of the relatively severe budget constraint and potentially strong influence of seasons, the relatively broad concept of 'regular consumption' seemed

most suitable to discern the dietary pattern, especially fruits and vegetables. The questions probed for information about consumer food buying and eating habits, among others. The list of fruits and vegetables included leafy and root vegetables and fruits including a very popular plantain and cassava. The regional differences in regular consumption of selected fruits and vegetables are identified. Kampala residents have access to a much wider variety of produce by the sheer fact of living in a large urban area and the resulting high density of consumers with relatively high incomes. The income constraint is much more limiting outside Kampala, although within Kampala there is some stratification of consumers living in various neighborhoods. Insights from the results show great opportunities for fruit and vegetable marketing driven primarily by incomes, but some regional preferences exist and seem not be determined by income alone.