

Compendium of food consumption statistics from household surveys in developing countries

Volume 1: Asia

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This publication aims at providing information on food consumption levels and patterns obtained from household surveys. As such, it replaces the Review of Food Consumption Surveys, which was last issued in 1988. While in essence pursuing the same aims as the latter, the present publication incorporates certain new features, as indicated below.

Firstly, a clear distinction is made between the following three types of food consumption information available: (i) food consumption expenditure; ii) quantities of food items consumed or acquired; and iii) nutritive values of food consumed or acquired.

Secondly, the information relating to nutritive values of food consumed or acquired is given due prominence thanks to the availability of a number of analytical tables obtained through a special data processing and tabulation programme undertaken in collaboration with the survey organization of selected countries. The immediate purpose of the programme was to obtain appropriate tabulations for the Sixth World Food Survey to be published in 1994. However, it has been conceived as part of a longer term effort to promote the processing and analysis of household survey data in countries for the purpose of assessing the food and nutrition situation.

Thirdly, certain useful indicators such as the percentage contribution of each food group to total food expenditure and to total calorie consumption and the percentage expenditure on food are also provided in the relevant tables.

This first issue of the publication presents data not only from the recent surveys but also, in a number of cases, from some undertaken as far back as the 1970's in order to provide some perspective of the changes over time. However, because of the many surveys involved, it is being issued in two volumes: Volume One, covering the developing countries in Asia, and Volume Two, covering the rest of the developing countries in Africa, Latin America and Oceania. Another compendium covering the developed countries will be issued, probably in 1994, following the computerization of all the available survey data in the FAO Statistics Division's data base. Subsequently, a single compendium, updating the information, will be periodically issued.

The present volume, which covers the developing countries in Asia, is organized as follows. Following the *Introduction* is a section entitled *General Notes*, which provides general descriptions of the data presented. Subsequent to this section are the four substantive parts of the document: *Part One* dealing with the tables relating to food consumption expenditure (monetary values); *Part Two* referring to the quantities of food items consumed; *Part Three* referring to food consumption in terms of nutritive values; and *Part Four* giving the country notes referring to survey coverage, concepts, definitions and mode of data collection.

GENERAL NOTES

1. Source of data

The data presented in this publication are mostly based on the survey reports published by responsible national organizations. However, in a number of cases, particularly with respect to the tables in Part Three, they have been obtained through special arrangements with the national organizations concerned. The reference source is in fact indicated at the end of each table presented.

Evidently, the primary sources for the data are sample surveys investigating on household consumption. The relevant surveys can be broadly considered as being of two types: specialized food consumption or nutrition surveys and surveys collecting data on household expenditure (either solely or in combination with income and other socio-economic data). While both types of survey provide food consumption information, their objectives and measurement procedures are different; hence, the food consumption information obtained is also expected to differ.

The first type of survey primarily aims at obtaining information on the food consumed by households and the corresponding nutritive values (i.e., calorie, protein, fat, etc.). The data collected refer to the quantities of food items consumed by members of the household. The food consumed within the household is usually measured at the kitchen level by weighing the food items used for the preparation of each meal. In addition, information on food wasted on the plate and left overs, etc., may also be collected to arrive at the actual amount of food consumed by the meal partakers. The information on food consumed away from the home (for example, in restaurants or canteens, from street vendors, at work or school, with other families, etc.) is normally collected either by interviewing each member of the household or by record-keeping. The nutritive values of the food consumed are obtained by applying the appropriate food composition factors to the quantity data.

Data on household expenditure from the second type of survey (henceforth referred to as expenditure type of survey) are collected primarily for investigating the economic behaviour of consumers and for other purposes such as the construction of cost of living indices or national accounts. Hence, from the consumption perspective, the focus is on household acquisitions of both food and non-food items. The food expenditure data, which are collected either by the interview or record-keeping method, therefore normally refer to food items acquired by the household. Supplementary information on meals/food consumed outside the household may also be collected. Thus, the food consumption data obtained from the expenditure type of survey generally reflect the food acquired by or available to the household during the reference period. Wastage or losses in the household are not normally accounted for.

The most commonly available surveys are those of the expenditure type. Furthermore, this type of survey has been carried out regularly in many developing countries in recent years. The specialized food consumption or nutrition surveys, being rather complicated and costly to implement on a large scale, have been carried out only in a few countries. In view of this, the majority of data presented in this publication are from surveys of the expenditure type.

The expenditure type surveys usually collect data referring to both the quantity and monetary value of each food item acquired by the household. However, the quantity data have been tabulated and published in a few countries only. The processing and tabulation of the data in terms of nutritive values have been undertaken in a yet fewer number of countries (namely Bangladesh, India and Indonesia). This process, which involves the conversion of the quantity data relating to the different food items consumed by the household into nutritive values, is normally undertaken in connection with specialized food consumption or nutrition surveys. However, as indicated above, few countries have carried out this type of survey. In view of this, the FAO Statistics Division has carried out a special programme to assist selected countries in undertaking the required processing and tabulation work on the basis of the food consumption data

available from surveys of the expenditure type¹. In Asia, such assistance has been provided to two countries; namely, the People's Republic of China and Pakistan. The results of this collaborative effort are also included in *Part Three*.

2. Availability and coverage of the surveys

The availability of the surveys varied from one country to another. In a few countries, surveys of the expenditure type have been conducted annually while in others, they have been conducted between intervals of three or five years. As regards coverage, while most of the surveys were nationwide, some were confined to certain areas or socio-economic groups.

For the purpose of this publication, the primary objective has been to include the recent surveys with nationwide coverage. However, in order to provide some perspective of changes over time, wherever possible, a few surveys of similar type conducted in the earlier period, but not prior to the year 1970, have also been included. In the absence of nationwide surveys, those with less than nationwide scope have been included if their coverage represented a large majority of the population.

3. The information content

(a) *Food consumption data*

The food consumption data presented in this publication refer to (i) food expenditure (consumption in terms of monetary value); (ii) quantities (in weight) of food items consumed or acquired; and (iii) nutritive values (i.e. calorie, protein and fat) of food consumed or acquired. The quantity data refer to food items only. In the case of food expenditure and nutritive values of food consumed, the data refer to total food and, as far as possible, their breakdown by food items/groups. This information is generally in the form of averages for groups of households classified according to income or total expenditure levels/classes. In many cases, separate tabulations for the urban and rural areas are also given.

Although the household is the unit of data collection, an analysis based on the household per caput average as the unit is preferable. However, particularly with respect to food expenditure, the data given in a number of the survey reports refer to averages per household. In a few exceptional cases, the averages are given on a per consumer unit or per spending unit basis. In all these cases the original units have been retained for the purpose of this publication.

(b) *Supplementary information*

As far as possible, the number of sample households, the estimated percentage of total households, the average size of households, and the average income/total expenditure corresponding to the income/expenditure classes are also given.

(c) *Food consumption indicators*

In addition to the above data, certain indicators, namely the percentage contribution of each food group to total food expenditure, the percentage contribution of each food group to total calorie consumption and the percentage of expenditure on food corresponding to the income/expenditure classes have been derived and included in the relevant tables. The percentage contributions of various food groups to total food expenditure reflect the food expenditure pattern, whereas the percentage contributions of various food groups to total calorie consumption reflect the dietary pattern. The proportion of food expenditure, which is

¹

FAO, Analysis of Food Consumption Data from Household Income and Expenditure Survey, paper presented at the Fourteenth Session of the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics, Beijing, People's Republic of China, 8-13 June 1992.

obtained as the ratio of food expenditure to the total consumption expenditure, reflects the level of welfare of the household.

(d) *Standardized classification of food items/groups*

The individual food items or groups given in the survey reports differ from one survey to another. In this connection, an attempt has been made to rearrange them according to a uniform classification. This classification was prepared on the basis of the classification of the food items and groups used in connection with the FAO Food Balance Sheets. However, the list of items adopted is less detailed as compared to that underlying the latter classification. In general, only those food items commonly consumed or purchased by the households are included and shown separately. This implies that minor food items and food items that are not commonly consumed are not shown separately. They are, however, included in the residual food items such as cereals not elsewhere specified (nes), milk products nes etc. On the other hand, meals away from home are included in the list since there were a number of surveys which provided such information.

In many survey reports fairly detailed food items are shown and this permitted the regrouping of food items according to the adopted classification. However, where this regrouping has not been possible, the relevant tables include appropriate explanatory footnotes.

(e) *Standardized measuring unit for quantity data relating to food items consumed*

In some cases, the measuring unit for the quantity data given in the survey reports refers to local ones. In this connection, the metric system for weights and volume is adopted as far as possible. The original units have been converted into the metric system by using national or international conversion factors. There are, however, some cases where the appropriate conversion factors were not available. In these cases the original units have been retained.

(f) *Types of classification*

As already indicated, the food consumption information is generally classified by size of income or total expenditure. However, in a few instances, the data have been classified by deciles of household income or total expenditure or by deciles of household per caput income or total expenditure.

In some cases, classifications by both income and total expenditure are available in the relevant survey reports. In such cases the classification by total expenditure has been selected for this publication. This is because total expenditure is believed to better reflect economic welfare. Moreover, it tends to be more accurately measured than income.

As regards the calorie consumption data in *Part Three*, additional tables referring to the classification of the sample households according to per caput calorie consumption levels are

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