

Symposium 4: Affordability of sustainable and healthy diets

Organization

Tuesday 5th of April 2022, 15h45-17h, AUG.00.0015

Discussants

- Hannah Ameye, post-doctoral researcher at LICOS, KULeuven, Belgium
- Marrit van den Berg, associate professor of development economics at WUR, the Netherlands
- Steve Wiggins, principal research fellow at Overseas Development Institute (ODI), United Kingdom

Moderated by Goedele Van den Broeck, assistant professor in agricultural economics at UCLouvain, Belgium

Format

- 5' introduction of theme and speakers
- 3x15' of presentation + small clarification questions
- 25' panel discussion with audience

Presentations

Hannah Ameye: *The rising price of nutritious foods: Insights from Ethiopia and Tanzania*

In Ethiopia, our research finds that real prices of all nutritionally-rich food groups increased significantly from 2005 to 2018, compared to staple crops, whose prices increased only slightly, and to oils, fats and sugar, whose prices decreased substantially. The price increases of nutritious foods are mostly linked to price changes in commercial production clusters, increased demand in urban areas and international price rises.

In Tanzania, we find that the most cost-effective sources of several important nutrients are dried fish and beef. However, between 2008 and 2019 the price of these foods have increased by over 60%. Consumer preferences are nevertheless also important when considering the affordability of diets. By calculating minimum cost food-poverty-lines, we find that the diets of the poorest 40% in Tanzania are 2-3 times more expensive than what would be strictly needed to meet all nutrient requirements, yet, nutrient deficiencies are still prevalent for over half of the sample.

Marrit van den Berg: *Economic pathways to affordable and culturally acceptable healthy diets In Mexico*

The EAT-Lancet Commission on food, planet, health has proposed radical dietary changes for both human and

planetary health. It is, however, unclear how these changes can be achieved. As food choices are determined by incomes, prices, and preferences, localized policies will have to be developed.

We use a combination of macro-modeling (GTAP) and micro-simulations to assess the fiscal policies and/or taste shifts required to achieve two sets of EAT-inspired diets in Mexico and the consequences of these changes for different population groups. We find that fiscal policy alone is not sufficient to achieve the required change.

Steve Wiggins: *What should researchers be investigating and policy makers be considering on food prices?*

What's the broader body of evidence on the evolution of food prices? A quick tour of the existing literature.

Why is it that healthy choices seem to be more costly than unhealthy choices? We know why the real cost of staple foods has fallen over the medium to long term, and we can imagine why ultra-processed food has dropped so much in price. Why have not the same drivers worked their magic for fruit and vegetables? (And why aren't agricultural economists addressing this question?)

What can be done to align prices with healthy eating? Does it come down to taxes on unhealthy choices used to finance subsidies on fruit and vegetables?

Bios

Hannah Ameye:

Hannah is a post-doctoral researcher at LICOS and lecturer in development economics at KU Leuven. She specializes in agricultural economics covering an array of topics on food and malnutrition both globally, and more specifically in East Africa. Her research focuses on the scope of issues of under- and overconsumption, how they are dispersed both across countries and within countries, and what influences them.

Marrit van den Berg:

Marrit van den Berg is associate professor at the development economics group of Wageningen University. She uses quantitative and mixed methods to analyse the (micro)economics of food and agriculture and has a special interest in gender relations.

Steve Wiggins:

Steve Wiggins is an agricultural economist at ODI. He's worked as a planner, teacher and researcher on agricultural and rural development in the global south since 1972.