

## **Do street food vendors sell a sufficient variety of foods for a healthful diet? The case of Nairobi**

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URI: <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/nsinf/fnb/2002/00000023/00000001/art00007>  
<http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/34709>

Date: 2002

### **Abstract:**

This study examined whether street food vendors sell a sufficient variety of foods for a healthful diet. It was hypothesized that vendors sold only low-cost food groups to enable the buyer to afford the food while the vendor also made a profit. A structured questionnaire was administered to 580 vendors in three selected locations. Data included product names, ingredients, methods of preparation, and the sex of the vendor. A little more than half of the vendors (53%) sold food of only one group; 44% sold cereals. Overall, 36% of vendors, mostly men, sold only carbohydrate products. The percentage of vendors selling foods of more than one group was higher in the working area (53%) than in the slum area (43%,  $p < .05$ ), and it was higher in both of these areas taken together than in the lower-middle income area (21%,  $p < .001$ ). Micronutrient and mixed-nutrient products were associated with female vendors. Although a slight majority of all street vendors sell foods of only one group, women vendors are capable of supplying a sufficient variety of food groups that consumers can afford. It appears that consumer purchasing power dictates the food groups provided by vendors, especially cereal-based foods. A policy on micronutrient fortification of cereal flours and fats used in popular street food preparation needs to be considered. This could be coupled with consumer and vendor education programs focusing on the importance of healthful diets.