

HOUSEHOLD DEMAND FOR VEGETABLES IN RURAL AREA OF CUDDALORE DISTRICT, TAMILNADU, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

An attempt has been made in this paper to study the consumption of vegetables in rural areas by income groups and to identify the factors influencing the demand for vegetables in the study area. There were differences in consumption level of vegetables in rural families across income groups. The results showed that the vegetable consumption in the study area is far below the recommended level and income elasticities are positive and they are lower than price elasticities. Therefore, lower prices through enhanced vegetable supplies brought about by the adoption of cost reducing or production enhancing technologies play a stronger role in increasing vegetable consumption than induced consumption via enhanced income.

Key words : Consumption, Household demand, Vegetables, Income group, Own, Cross price elasticity, Expenditure elasticity

Food security is the physical, economical and environmental access to balanced diet, which enables the individual to live a healthy and productive life (Paroda, 2003). The food security rests on the most efficient use of natural resources like land, water, energy and plant diversity. Further, food security may be determined at various levels, viz., at the level of a family, a community or a country in terms of demand and supply indicators. It is best assured when food is available on a continuous and sustainable basis, preferably from local production, processing, storage and distribution regardless of climatic fluctuations and other variations. Therefore, it would be important to realize an even and a continuous availability of food in sufficient quantity and quality particularly in the developing countries to essentially safeguard the food and nutritional security of the mankind.

Optimal nutrition will demand the intake of a wide range of foods, which taken together and in judicious combination (in a well balanced diet) can provide the required essential nutrients. Ensuring good nutrition is not just equivalent to avoidance of hunger. While the latter can be achieved through the intake of a single staple cereal, the former will demand besides cereals, an adequate supply of other foods such as pulses, vegetables, fruits and milk. Therefore, while sustaining food grain production, the production of quality foods has to be significantly raised to ensure nutritionally adequate

household diets. The policy makers need to fight at two ends of the spectrum, feeding the millions and ensuring adequate and nutritional food. In other words, need of the hour is not just food security but ensuring nutrition security to the hungry millions. Hence, an attempt was made in this paper to study the consumption of vegetables in rural areas by income groups and to identify the factors influencing the demand for vegetables in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

The Cuddalore district was selected purposively, and it forms the universe of the study. The growing human population, rising per capita income and urbanization are the major factors that influence the food consumption pattern. Hence, the villages nearby four municipalities were identified and a list of total number of households in these villages was prepared. After arranging these villages in the descending order of total number of households, the top five villages were selected in each municipal area to ensure adequate sample size. Thus, total number of sample villages was 20. A sample of 300 rural households was distributed in the selected villages in probability proportion to the total number of households in them.

Selected households were post stratified into two groups based on their annual gross income. These households were contacted individually for the collection of details on consumption of vegetables with the help of pretested questionnaire. The study was limited to five vegetables viz., gourds, tomato, eggplant, lady's finger and beans (locally it is called as avarai) as they were accounting for nearly 30 per cent in production of