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Smallholder output market participation, market food environment and food purchase diversity in rural Uganda

Abstract:

Although rural populations in SSA are acquiring an increasing part of their food from markets, the role that the market food environment plays in the linkage between agriculture and nutrition is understudied. Understanding how the rural market food environment can be made to work to deliver nutrient-rich food is important to tackling undernourishment in SSA. Without accounting for market diversity, recent studies have shown the significance of market access to household and individual diet diversity, but the evidence is still inconclusive. We use three waves of panel data from rural Uganda to describe the diversity in market food availability and to test the hypothesis that small-farm household output market participation influences the rural market food environment and positively impacts their food purchase diversity. We find a positive statistically significant effect of output market participation on the food purchase diversity score. In addition, village food sales diversity score has a positive impact on non-staple food purchase diversity. Our results highlight the need to not only enhance market accessibility but also to increase market availability of non-staples and biofortified foods in order to increase non-staple food purchase diversity. In this respect, policy efforts to influence smallholder market participation and hence market availability of nutritious food could be directed to increasing their access to improved seed, fertilizer, and extension contact.

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