Measuring Food Consumption: The Foundations

LECTURE 5

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A quick reminder

- What justifies our interest in collecting data on food consumption?
- Food consumption expenditure is a key component of any measure of living standards (lecture 1), poverty (lecture 14), and much more
- There are additional research objectives, which are useful to keep in mind when designing the food module of the questionnaire:
 - nutrition and food security
 - consumer price indices
 - informing National Accounts
 ...





	Q	Questionnaire design challenges for food module	
1	1.	Acquisition vs. consumption	
	2.	Recall vs. diary and length of reference period	
	3.	List of food items	
	4.	Meal participation	
	5.	. Timing of visits	
	6.	. Food away from home	
	7.	Non-standard measurement units	
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1. Acquisition vs. consumption

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Definitions

- Acquisition coming into possession, taking control of goods
- Consumption utilizing goods (*i.e.* eating, in the case of food)
- Mode of acquisition:
- purchase
 own-production
 in-kind receipt

Acquisition vs. consumption

- All goods that are consumed have been acquired in some way
- However, acquisition and consumption do not necessarily take place during the same reference period
- During a given period, say previous week, three possibilities:
 - a chicken is acquired and eaten (A = C)
 - a chicken is acquired, but not eaten (A > C)
 - a chicken is eaten, but has been acquired earlier (A < C)

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Why definitions matter

Acquisition and consumption are measured for different purposes:

- 1) Interest in consumption is justified by interest in estimating a number of things: standard of living, calorie intake, etc.
- 2) Interest in acquisition is justified by interest in food security (availability)
- Interest in acquisition from purchases (i.e. food expenditure) is justified by CPI weighting, and informing national accounts
- Based on survey objectives, concept(s) of interest must be clear, and the questionnaire must be unambiguous



Approaches to data collection Conforti et al. (2017: 44)

Typically, data on food are collected in one of three ways:

- A. Acquisition Households report on food they acquired through purchases, own production and in-kind transfers. Actual consumption of the same food is not reported.
- B. Combination of acquisition and consumption Households report on food they acquired through purchases, without specifying the amount of food consumed. Food consumption derived from own-production or received from transfers is reported.
- C. Consumption Households report on food actually consumed, and on whether that same food was purchased, own-produced or received as a transfer.

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Common questionnaire design issues

Consider the following examples. Comment on each of them by answering these questions:

- 1. From collected data, could we estimate food consumption? Acquisition? Purchase? All of the above?
- 2. What about unit values?
- 3. Can you see any flaws in questionnaire design?

example 1		SECTION 78	FOOD EXPENDITURES			
	1 Within the <u>past 7 days</u> , slid the members of this household out/drink any of this () EM() within the jepusehold?	2. How much in total did your household consume of this (ITEM) in the <u>part</u> 7 days?	3. How much did the household purchase of the (DEM) during the DEE 7 days?	4. How much did your household spend on this (ITEM) during the part 7 days?	5. How much of this (ITEM) came from own production during the past 7 days?	 How much of this (TEI came from gifts and other sources during th past 7 days?
No consumption rules out acquisition!	PASS-ONE Y LIST IN YAN CONSTANT WITHIN THE HOUSENSET WITH THE HOUSENSET WITH THE ADDITIONAL OF THE ADDITION FOR ALL THE ADDITION FOR ALL THE ADDITION FOR ALL THE ADDITION FOR ALL THE ADDITION FOR ALL THE THE ADDITION FOR ALL THE ADDITION FOR ALL THE ADDITION FOR ALL THE THE ADDITION FOR ALL THE ADDITIO	44404000 44400 4700 4700 4700 4700 4700	IF NONE WINTE & FOR QUARTITY AND LEAVE UNIT DEANE H OS TTT OFTIME	THIS QUESTION REFERS TO THE QUANTITY IN QUESTION 3	P NON-WHITE DICKE QUANTITY AND LEAVE UNIT BLANK TELEVISION TELEVISIO TELEVISION - 4 TELEVISION - 4 TELEVISION - 5 OTESS OTESS	DECLEC FOOD THEN DUBINE INF MIDBLE DO MIDBLE DO MIDBLE DO UNITY NOTE STOR OWNTY NOTESTOR TITATEM TITAT
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Evidence on common questionnaire design issues Smith et al. (2014: 14-15)

- 1. Acquisition surveys: filter question on something else (18%) see example 1 $\,$
- 2. Routine month surveys: ambiguity about whether respondents should report on the routine month in the recall period or only those months in which any food item is consumed (13%) see example 2
- 3. Ambiguity on whether to report on acquisition or consumption (7%)
- Data collected on food harvested rather than food consumed from home production (3%) – see example 1

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Should we collect data on acquisition or consumption?

- It depends on the purpose of the survey (lecture 4)
- Welfare analysts would want consumption (lectures 1-2)
- Statisticians (and others) are also interested in acquisition to construct weights for their CPIs
- Conforti et al. (2017) evidence from 81 recent surveys says that the difference in estimated mean acquisition and mean consumption is small, but acquisition is much more variable

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Recommendations

- 1. Always collect data on all modes of acquisition (purchase, ownproduction, in-kind receipts), irrespective of whether focus is on amount consumed or acquired.
 - If questionnaire only records food obtained through some sources (such as purchases) there will be <u>underestimation</u> of both consumption and acquisition
 - Pay special care to in-kind receipts that are likely to be missed, such as payments for labor and social programs
 - Be careful not to duplicate information captured in other modules (e.g., employment or social assistance)

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Recommendations

FAO and WB (2018: 53-55)

- 2. Surveys should be designed so that it is clear to respondents, enumerators, and data users what information (consumption, acquisition, or both) is requested and reported
 - If consumption: it should be clear whether it is food intended for consumption (including food waste) or food actually consumed (net of food waste)
 - If purchases: recommended to add an extra question on how much was consumed out of those purchases, to avoid mixing acquisitions from purchases with consumption from own-production and in-kind receipts

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Recommendations

EAO and WB (2018: 53-55)

3. Avoid sources of incomplete or ambiguous enumeration

- Do not use filter questions on consumption to rule out acquisition (and vice versa)
- Avoid filter questions that focus on food purchases
- For own-production, the question must be worded to clearly indicate food consumed from own-production rather than food harvested. If not, values reported may include food entering the household's production stocks (that is, not for immediate consumption).

2. Recall vs. diary and length of reference period

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Definitions: recall and diary

Data on household food consumption (or acquisition) commonly collected in one of two ways:

- 1. Respondents are interviewed and asked to recall consumption during a specified period (past week, past month...).
- 2. Households are asked to keep a diary over a reference period (days, weeks...) and record consumption at the moment it takes place.

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Definitions: recall period and reference period

- Recall period: the period over which respondents are asked to recall their consumption
- Reference period: the period over which data collection happens

For example:

- Households are interviewed about food consumption in the past 7 days, over 4 weekly visits
- 7 days = recall period, 28 days = reference period

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Example of recall questionnaire Zambia Living Conditions Monitoring Survey (LCMS VII) 2015

			PURCI	BASES			OWN FR	ODUCTION			
		01	Q2	03		04		Q5	Q6		07
	LAST? WHERS READ OUT	Pid this household trichise conume becaive, during the last 2 week 2 725 1 NO 2 NEXT ITEM DON'T KNOW 3	During the last 2 weeks, how much did your household spend on [ITEM]? (IN TOTAL)	How many R (IT EM) hdy household pu that amount?	FNIT SJ of our relate for	During the los how many [U own produced did your house convume?	t 1 weeks. NITS of [ITEM] sheld	How much would this (ITEM) cost if you were to buy it?	During the lat how many (U [ITEM] thć y household sec without paym	t 2 weeks, NITS] of our cive sut?	How much would this [ITEM] cost if you was to way it?
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	Pulses and L	egames	DURING LAST 2 WEEKS	5	_		_			_	
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28	Fresh beans (e shelled	scl Green beaus)									
	0										

Example of diary Zimbabwe Poverty Income Consumption and Expenditure Survey 2011

Date	Quantify e g /x4kg	Item description Total value		alue C	Kind of consumption PU-purchased in urban outlet PV-purchased in non-urban outlet G-gifts, P-poyment in land H-barrier O-out consumption T-transfers						
1/6	x1 loaf	Bread	1	36	PU	PN	G	В	P	0	Τ
1/6	3x1L	Milk	2	70	PU	PN	G	В	9	0	т
1/6	lx1kg	Beef	5	60	PU	PN	Ģ	в	P	0	т
3/6	lx5kg	Maize meal	3	90	PU	PN	G	в	?	0	т
3/6	Ex300ml	Soft drink		64	PU	PN	G	В	P	0	Т
3/6	12xquarts	Beer clear	19	20	PU	PN	G	В	Р	0	т

Diary or recall?

- Which approach is better, in terms of the quality of collected data?
- Both methods have pros and cons
- In particular, they both have the potential to generate measurement error, for different reasons
- Risks need to be carefully evaluated, using empirical evidence



Short recall period

- Telescoping: tendency to mistakenly report consumption that has actually taken place outside the recall period
- More likely if expenditure is perceived as extraordinary, salient
- Leads to over-reporting of consumption

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Length of recall period and shape of the distribution Rosalind Gibson (2005: 139)



A short recall overestimates variance, which is a problem for measures of "inadequate intake" (including poverty)

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Alternative methods are unsatisfactory - I/II
Usual month approach

- Respondents are asked to report consumption for the "usual month" during the previous year
- Advocated by Deaton and Grosh (2000) to capture typical consumption
- At best, it is not more effective than simple recall; at worst, it introduces errors related to education of respondents, due to cognitive burden (Fiedler and Mwangi 2017: 25; Friedman et al. 2017)

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Alternative methods are unsatisfactory – II/II Bounded recall

- First visit to household establishes the bound of the recall period for a second visit, which is when the interview actually takes place
- Meant to avoid telescoping errors
- Not yet enough evidence that it offers significant advantages in data quality (Gibson, 2005), while it is more costly to administer (double the visits)

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Do these "details" matter?

- Large body of evidence finds that the choice between diary and recall, and of the length of recording periods, can significantly affect results
- Important papers that studied the impact of survey methodology on consumption and poverty statistics:
 - SHWALITA study in Tanzania (Beegle et al. 2012, Gibson et al. 2015, de Weerdt et al. 2016)
 - Niger (Backiny-Yetna et al. 2017)



Overview

Beegle et al. (2012)

- Focus on food consumption
- Benchmark ("gold standard"): personal diary with daily visits
- Experimental design compares benchmark with 7 alternative questionnaires, which vary by method of data capture (recall or diary), level of respondent, length of reference period, number of items in the recall list (which we will cover in lecture 6)

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Fielding eight alternative consumption questionnaires

- "Our survey experiment entailed fielding eight alternative consumption questionnaires randomly assigned to 4,000 households in Tanzania."
- If questionnaire design did not matter, results from data collected through different questionnaires should not differ too much















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Overview

Backiny-Yetna et al. (2014)

- Objective: assess impact of survey methodology on poverty statistics
- Method: experimental approach, 3 alternative instruments
- Motivation: Three different instruments had historically been used to collect food consumption data in Niger:
- 2005 CWIQ Usual month consumption, list of ~200 food items
- 2007 HH Budget Survey 7 day diary, open food list
- 2011 LSMS Survey 7 day recall
 same module for non-food expenditures
- Can comparisons be made about poverty over time in Niger?

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Mocule	Mean Kilocalories per Capita	Hunger Prevalenc
1. Long list of 58 food items; 14 day recall	1,794	.683
	(1,723-1,865)	(.639728)
2. Long list of 56 food items; 7 day recall	2,129	.481
	(2,055-2,203)	(.432531)
Short list of 17 food items; 7 day recall*	2,066	.484
	(2,001 2,131)	(.435 .534)
4. Long list of 58 food items; usual 12 month recall	1,909	.594
	(1,823-1,995)	(.546642)
14 day household cliaries with frequent visits	2,412	.268
	(2,340-2,485)	(.223313)
6. 14 day household diaries with infrequent visits	2,517	.230
	12.443-2.5911	(186-275)
7. 14 day individual diaries with frequent visits	2,677	.188
	(2,599-2,755)	(.148228)



Recap of the evidence

- Recall vs. diary: questionnairedesign choices matter for results on consumption, poverty, nutrition...
- In order to yield high-quality data in low-income and rural contexts, diary requires frequent, costly supervision
- Recall period: food consumption tends to be underestimated with longer recalls
- Little evidence in support of alternative methods (e.g., "usual month" and "bounded recall")

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Recommendations

- While a diary approach may be the "gold standard" with close supervision and careful implementation, it is not suitable for resource-constrained statistical offices in low- and middle-income countries
- Low-income countries are advised to adopt recall interviews and a 7-day recall period, as this method provides a good balance between accuracy and cost-effectiveness
- Any survey using diary methods must be closely supervised to ensure compliance. The reference period should not exceed 2 weeks.

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Recommendations

FAO and WB (2018: 50-53)

- 3. The "usual month" approach should not be used.
- Any change in recall period or data collection method (diary vs. recall) should be accompanied by an experimental component aimed at assessing the change in survey estimates.
- 5. The evidence in Beegle et al. (2012), De Weerdt et al (2016), and Backiny-Yetna et al. (2017) will hopefully serve as a useful reminder.

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Lessons learned

- Quality data on food consumption are crucial for several research objectives, living standards measurement being one of them
- Questionnaire design matters: large impact on final results
- This lecture has explored some foundational choices in the design of the food module:
 - Should we measure consumption or acquisition?
 - Should we use diary or recall? How should the reference period be set?
- Experimental evidence provides guidance.

References

Required readings

FAO and The World Bank. 2018. Food data collection in Household Consumption and Expenditure Surveys. Guidelines for low- and middle-income countries. Rome. Sections 2.1, 2.3, 3.1, 3.3.

Smith, L. C., Dupriez, O., and Troubat, N. 2014. Assessment of the reliability and relevance of the food data collected in national household consumption and expenditure surveys. International Household Survey Network. Sections 3.1, 3.2, 3.3.

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Thank you for your attention

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Exercise 2 – Acquisition vs. consumption

Look at the following examples of recent questionnaires. Ask yourself what they would allow you to estimate:

- total value of food consumption?
- total value of food acquisition?
- both?
- none?

For each example, shade the parts of the diagram for which you would be able to provide an estimate.

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CTION SA: FOOD LAST 7 DAYS										
1.		2.		3.		4.	5.		6.	
Over the past one weik (7 days), dd you or offens in your houshold consume avy (1747) NCLUER FOOD BOTH KATES COMUNEUR IN THE HOUSHOLD AND THAT EARLIN STRAKTELY AN INVESTIGATION AND THAT EARLIN STRAKTELY AN INVESTIGATION AND YEES1 NO2 ► NEXT FEM	How much in total did your household consume in the past week? IF NONE R SEE UNIT CODES		How much came from purchases? IF NONE RECORD 0 AND SKIP TO Q5.		How much did you spend?	How much came from own production? IF NOT CONSUMED FROM OWN PRODUCTION RECORD 0. SEE UNIT CODES		How much came from gif and other sources? IF NONE RECORD 0. SEE UNIT CODES		
				SEE UNIT CODES						
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