OPEN MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON FOOD SECURITY, AGRICULTURE AND RURAL STATISTICS

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Food away from home measurement
Challenges, recommendations, and innovations for data collection

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Introduction

• FAFH makes up a growing share of overall food consumption in developing countries
  • Reflecting changes in diet patterns associated with economic development
  • Critical for poverty and nutrition measurement

• However, there are many challenges associated with collection data on FAFH

![Urban China chart]

Source: You, 2014

![Moderate poverty - Peru chart]

Source: Farfan et al, 2017
Main data collection challenges (1)

1. **Definition** of “food away from home”
   - No standardized, commonly accepted definition
   - Subject to ambiguities (e.g. food prepared at home but consumed outside, food prepared outside but consumed at home)
   - Unless clearly defined, potential for misclassification or omission

2. **Which** items to collect for?
   - Plethora of different dishes & packaged foods
   - Often not feasible to create a pre-determined fixed list of specific FAFH “items” (common practice for at-home)
Main data collection challenges (2)

3. **What** type of information to collect?
   - Expenditures - fairly straightforward
   - **Content and quantities** - much more difficult
     - Particularly important for nutrition, but also poverty
     - Meal content is often unknown to the consumer
     - Difficult to quantify what is eaten and how much

4. **Who** to ask about FAFH?
   - For **at-home** food consumption, often collected from key HH informant
   - But **FAFH** is more commonly an individual phenomena
     - FAFH of other members often not observed – since it takes place outside the home
Food Data Collection Guidelines

• Developed by Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Food Security Agriculture and Rural Statistics (IAEG-AG)

• Endorsed by UN Statistical Commission (2018)

• Reference document for NSOs, survey practitioners designing surveys that involve the collection of food consumption and expenditure data.
Key FAFH recommendations (1)

1. **Definition** of “food away from home”
   - A clear and precise definition of FAFH
   - A clear protocol to handle any potential ambiguities – for example whether the survey intends to include in FAFH:
     - Food prepared at home and consumed outside
     - Food prepared outside and consumed at home (i.e. takeout/takeaway)

2. **Which** items to collect for?
   - One- or two-line items in consumption list doesn’t cut it
   - Organize data collection around **meal events**, including **snacks** and **drinks**
     - Adapt the meal events/snacks/drinks list to the local context
Key FAFH recommendations (2)

3. **What** type of information to collect?
   - At a minimum, collect info on the *value* of all meals consumed during each meal event
     - *Free food* must be accounted (as visitor elsewhere, school, work, social programs, etc.)
     - When feasible, **combine with outside data** to estimate FAFH-related *nutrient* content
       - Through survey of food establishments or administrative data on the content of public meals
       - Linking information to capture in main survey: type eating establishment (e.g., fine dining, fast-food restaurant, street vendor)

4. **Who** to ask about FAFH?
   - There should be a **separate module for FAFH**, preferably done **at the individual level**
FAFH Research Agenda

- Guidelines stress that there is still need for additional methodological research on FAFH data collection methods - This remains true in 2022

- Identify some specific areas for FAFH research
  - **Bounding of recall** – “Bounding” the recall period for a household with another visit to mark the beginning of the recall period can, in principle, help reduce telescoping and improve the quality of the recall

  - **Telephone interview (aids)** - phones could help in-person interviews by using follow-up phone calls to aid the filling of a diary, or the collection of a second set of recall data.

  - **Multiple visits** - One way to reduce excess variability from a short (7-day recall) is to perform a second non-consecutive interview to the same households

  - **Alternative methods for capturing content and quantities**

  - **Generally, expand the evidence base** – Guidance is based on a relatively small number of methodological studies conducted in a handful of low- and middle-income countries.
    - In addition to testing new methods, dire need to validate methods in more contexts and countries
Experimental evidence on capturing FAFH
Farfàn, McGee, Perng, and Vakis (2019)

• 2,400 households in urban Hanoi, Vietnam

• **Experimental approach**: five different questionnaire designs for capturing FAFH

• What is the impact of different designs on reported FAFH expenditure as well as total food expenditure
Experimental design

T1 - One-line recall, 7 days
T2 - Individual diary, closely supervised (the ‘gold standard’)  
T3 - Individual recall, 7 days
T4 - Household diary with bounding, 7 days (‘household informant’)
Results

% deviation in FAFH expenditure from individual diary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-line recall</td>
<td>-43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual recall</td>
<td>-22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household informant</td>
<td>-11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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- **One line is not enough:** greatest underestimation of FAFH (-43%), in part because households do not report any FAFH at all

- **Household informant** performs well in this case: likely due to the specific way it was implemented (bounding, worksheet helping to track other hh members)
Additional FAFH research in the pipeline

• Individual FAFH data collection through a mobile application
  • Develop a dedicated app and deploy to the phones of selected household members (or provide with phones)
  • **Individuals** will have the ability record FAFH meal events *as they happen*
    • Record type of meal, cost, *as well as content*
    • Potentially also have an option to record photographs of the meal contents
  • Currently under discussion
Take Aways

- There are existing guidelines for FAFH measurement that countries would be wise to follow.

- However, there is still need for further methodological research:
  - Validating/testing new methods
  - Validating/testing in different countries/contexts

- Always looking for opportunities to partner with countries/researchers interested in FAFH methods research:
  - To help update/refine existing guidance and explore innovative approaches.