

Dr. John Fiedler (IFPRI, Washington DC, USA, j.fiedler@cgiar.org) – *How important is food consumed away from home? Evidence from India.*

Despite various shortcomings, Household Consumption and Expenditure Surveys (HCES) are increasingly being used to address food and nutrition issues because they contain a great deal of information about food acquisition and consumption, are conducted routinely in most countries, are statistically representative at sub-national levels, and are already being conducted and paid for by government. Among the most common, significant shortcomings of HCES is the inadequate collection of data about food people consume away from home. The objective of this paper is to better understand the magnitude of food consumed away from home (FCAFH) and identify alternative ways in which it might be estimated.

Many countries' HCES collect data about FCAFH. In some cases, the data collected, however, are only partially used in calculating food or nutrient availability or consumption. This is especially likely to be the case when it is collected in other than the food consumption module. The India National Sample Survey Organization's 68th round (2012/13), for instance, asks about the number of meals usually eaten by each household member, the number of days each individual household member was away from home for more than 24 hours, the number of meals members ate away from home by source (obtained at school, from employers, as guests in other households or received on payment), and the number of meals served to non-household members. These data will be juxtaposed with FCAFH that is tracked in the food consumption module to assess their consistency. In addition, the paper employs combinations of three analytic approaches to investigate the significance of alternative methods of calculating the nutrient content of FCAFH for which only values (costs) are available: (1) the Subramanian & Deaton (1996) method, estimating the average cost per nutrient for each type of meal and then assuming alternative ratios of the cost per nutrient of meals/processed foods and of non-processed foods, (2) specifying a specific common meal and assuming its nutrient content is representative of all such meals/processed foods and (3) for the school-based Mid-Day-Meal (MDM) program—which account for 49% of all reported meals consumed outside of the home in India—assume MDM program requirements regarding the types and portions of food and their minimum nutrient content are adhered to, and estimate the apparent nutrient intakes from the MDMs individuals reported consuming. The proportion of total nutrients provided by FCAFH by type of meal will be discussed. Lessons for strengthening HCES questionnaire design and analysis, for India and other countries, are discussed.