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Abstract

The COVID-19 lockdown measures in Uzbekistan disrupted the purchasing power of city residents as well as their food

security. The ability to earn cash income is a significant determinant of urban food security, and perhaps the biggest challenge

urban dwellers face under crisis times. This is because urban dwellers have limited options to produce own food and have to

rely on city markets for access to food. This paper explores food accessibility and food availability in the three major cities of

Uzbekistan during the COVID-19 pandemic. Primary data was collected in July 2020, via an on-line survey of 652 random city

residents of Uzbekistan. The on-line survey was part of a bigger case study by the authors, entitled "Food security in cities of

Uzbekistan in light of the COVID-19 crisis" [1]. The study reveals that changes in income due to the pandemic have increased

the vulnerability of the city dwellers with regards to economic and physical access to major food items.

The findings from the

descriptive analysis indicates that urban consumers changed their food buying routines from bazaars to supermarkets, and

small shops due to mobility restriction and food safety reasons. Most of the respondents across cities reported to be tapping in

their savings to cover shortages in income to buy their main food items. As most survey respondents exhausted their savings,

they resorted to buying fewer quantity of food and enjoyed lesser variety and portion of foods (shifting from expensive meat

products to bread, cereals, eggs and vegetables). The findings confirm that physical, and the more so economic access to food

is a vital factor for urban food security.

Keywords: COVID-19, food security, lockdown, urban consumers, food consumption, Uzbekistan.

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