



### ENABLING SAFER FOOD IN TRADITIONAL MARKETS



Across food systems, food safety is supported by three pillars: An enabling environment, positive behavior change, and best practices and appropriate technologies. While each of these pillars are necessary, none are sufficient alone. This brief explores the enabling environment that supports food safety in Ethiopian traditional markets.

Like millions of people in low- and middle-income countries, Ethiopians shop at traditional or "open air" markets to access fresh, nutritious foods.



Traditional markets, which are part of the informal food sector, have unique regulatory (policy), social (norms), and physical (infrastructure) enabling factors that are crucial to safeguard the public from unsafe food and foodborne disease.



Without critical resources and infrastructure, like clean water, food bought and sold in traditional markets have significant safety risks.

Through EatSafe's surveys of consumers, vendors, and market actors, the physical infrastructures that compromise food safety efforts include:

- Lack of free, clean, and/or running water, hand washing, and toilet facilities;
- Poor waste and byproduct disposal systems;
- Mud in walkways;
- Presence of non-domesticated animals; and
- Vendors' unhygienic food storage, handling, and disposal practices.

*Improving the physical enablers of food safety will reduce the risk of bacterial contamination in foods and thus the risk of contracting foodborne disease.*



While Ethiopia's Food and Nutrition Policy prioritizes food safety, regulations omit oversight of health and safety in the informal food sector.

According to the World Risk Poll, 40% of respondents do not think the Ethiopian government does a good job at ensuring the food they buy is safe. EatSafe's research in traditional markets found that while some vendors are licensed with the local administration, others are not, leading to variable experiences with authorities. In EatSafe's study market, there is no formal market management authority to provide oversight or enforce food safety rules.

*Ethiopia can take further action to elevate the importance of both food safety and traditional markets in local and national food systems.*



People's food safety behaviors reflect social norms – the subtle or overt rules that guide behaviors, attitudes, and practices.

Generally, consumers seek to reduce food safety risks at home, but socioeconomic factors may constrain their efforts. For example, in Ethiopia,

- While health and nutrition are collective values, food safety is seen as less of a priority.
- Food price and quality, which may or may not include safety, are the most important factors consumers consider when purchasing food.
- Vendors do not engage in much collective action related to food safety, nor do they have strong relationships with consumers.

*Embracing traditional markets as community spaces can increase social norms that enable a "culture of food safety."*



For more information, visit [gainhealth.org/EatSafe](https://gainhealth.org/EatSafe).

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