

FOOD SAFETY IN TRADITIONAL MARKETS

*EatSafe aims to improve the safety of nutritious foods in traditional markets, which are critical for sustaining vendors' livelihoods and consumers' food security. However, traditional markets in the informal food sector can pose significant safety risks for highly nutritious foods such as fresh kale, tomato, and lettuce - EatSafe in Ethiopia's key commodities. EatSafe's formative research in **Hawassa City, Ethiopia**, summarized here, will inform the design of market-based interventions that educate and empower market actors, vendors, and consumers to demand safer nutritious foods.*



FOOD SAFETY RISKS

Little research has examined contamination levels of vegetables sold in Ethiopian traditional markets - a gap EatSafe seeks to fill.

KNOWLEDGE-ACTION GAP

While vendors say they practice proper hygiene to improve the safety of the foods they sell, and signal quality to consumers, EatSafe found discrepancies in their self-reported and observed behaviors.

SELF-REPORTED



OBSERVED



These discrepancies may reflect a lack of knowledge on food safety and/or physical resource limitations (e.g., clean water in the market).



VENDOR PRACTICES

Vegetable vendors, most of whom are women, vary in how and where they operate in traditional markets.

GENDER DYNAMICS

Most vegetable vendors (80%) are women. Vending is their primary income source; most have been working at the market for 8 years.

VARIABLE VENDING OPERATIONS

Operations vary: vegetable vendors are located inside or outside the market perimeter; some sell food placed on raised structures like carts, while others sell food in bowls or plastic sheets on the ground; finally, some vendors are unofficial, while others have obtained a license to operate from the local administration.



CONSUMER DEMAND

Consumers are not concerned about food safety and believe they have low risk for foodborne disease.

FOOD SAFETY PRACTICES

Consumers are confident their at-home practices keep food safe.



Consumers are budget conscious: they choose good quality food because they cannot afford to have waste, so they do not buy foods that may soon spoil.

CUES FOR DECISION MAKING

Most consumers (60%) are women. Shopping for food at the market is seen as a practical necessity, and not a social occasion.

At the market, consumers regularly visit the same vendors, though they may compare vendors using the following characteristics:

Food Quality	Price	Vendor Personality	Food Safety
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RELATIONSHIPS WITH VENDORS

Some consumers are distrustful of vendors. While consumers may discuss the price and origin of what they buy with vendors, they food quality or safety is rarely discussed.



ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Despite favorable policy conditions, poor infrastructure and social connections limit food safety improvements.

POLICY

Reviews of [local and national policies](#) found a promising landscape for food safety in Ethiopia, though limited resources and implementation have challenged efforts. Further, a central market management authority to provide oversight does not exist, limiting policy effectiveness.



PHYSICAL

Poor market infrastructure is a challenge. For example, without running water, vendors may bring in jerrycans. Toilets/wash basins are in poor condition, and paid access are contributing factors to relatively low rates of hand washing.



SOCIAL

Several stakeholders, including governmental agencies, [expressed interest in supporting](#) food safety in Hawssa. However, no vendor associations or consumer advocacy organizations exist to pursue improvements in food safety.



RESEARCH METHODS

SURVEYS

Cross-sectional surveys with consumers and vendors; observations of a subset of vendors.

INTERVIEWS

In-depth interviews and focus group discussions with consumers and vendors.

HAZARD REVIEWS

Review of foodborne hazards in Ethiopia; microbial field sampling

ETHNOGRAPHY

Semi-structured interviews using cognitive mapping tools with consumers and vendors.

ADVOCACY ANALYSIS

Stakeholder mapping and engagement; policy recommendations

For additional information, visit gainhealth.org/EatSafe.

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