

From nutritional insecurity to food well-being: how to improve the assessment of real-life food situations?

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INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVES

Despite the recognition of the multifunctionality of food in the definition of “food security”, the programs aiming to achieve it tacitly consider that nutritional needs satisfaction is a sufficient goal and that the other functions of food - pleasure, social ties, identity- are of less value. We wanted to test this assumption with this research.

METHOD/DESIGN

Using Happiness Economics advances and crossing them with food sociology knowledge, we proposed the concept of *subjective food well-being*, defined as the way people assess their food situation, and we developed a measure to evaluate it, the *experienced food satisfaction*.

We put this measure in a questionnaire submitted to 3 samples of Malian people living in different environments and facing various food issues and objective nutritional insecurity levels that we measured and studied also with the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale and qualitative open questions.

Econometric analysis (logistic regressions) were realized with the collected nutritional data and with qualitative variables created from individual answers on food representations and practices available in the survey.

311 rural people
from Kayes region



310 urban people
from Bamako

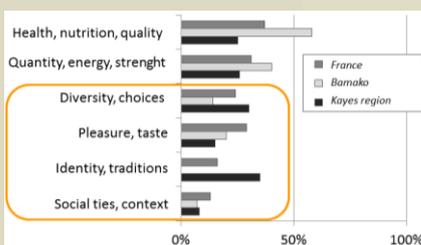
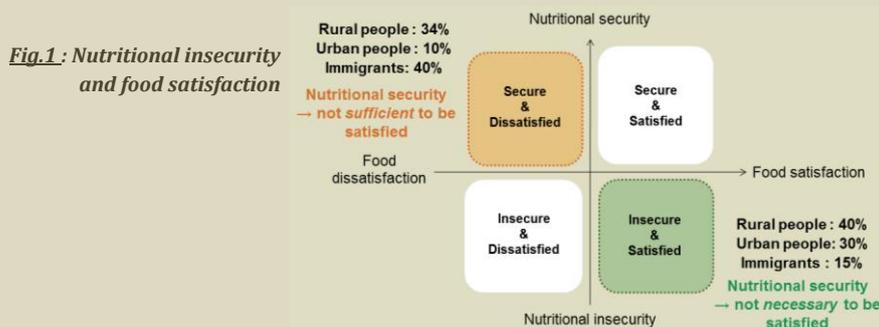


279 immigrants
living in France



RESULTS

The results revealed that, regardless of the sample, *nutritional security* and *food satisfaction* are not correlated (fig.1) → **the lack of nutritional insecurity is not a guarantee or a precondition of a high experienced food satisfaction.**



The qualitative answers revealed that people spontaneously think to every dimension of food (fig.2). And the econometric analysis confirmed that **every dimension of food**, biological, hedonic, social or identity, **can be decisive in people’s perception of their food experience**, even when they are food insecure (fig.3). The hierarchy between these dimensions is moreover specific to each community. *Identity* is for example very important for our rural people, whereas *choice* influence more our urban people (and create frustration and dissatisfaction for them), and the *social dimension* is more decisive for the immigrants.

CONCLUSION

- Even in case of food insecurity, the biological dimension of food is neither *the only*, nor *the most important* determinant → **Food can thus not be reduced solely to its nutritional function.**
- This research implies **important consequences for food programs efficiency and the definition of their goals.** As the Committee of Food Security recommended in 2012, it pleads to complete existing food insecurity approaches with evaluations of individual food experience perceptions.