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**ILRI and CIRAD**

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# **Meeting urban consumers' appetite for high-quality meat in West Africa.**

Policy recommendations based on a field survey in urban areas of Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Nigeria

## Executive summary

The demand for meat in West Africa is growing, driven by urbanization, rising incomes, and changing dietary preferences. An analysis of the dynamics influencing meat consumption preferences in the urban centres of Dakar, Abidjan, and Abuja shows that various criteria such as organoleptic quality, market availability, industry standards, trust in domestic meat, nutritional quality, and civic and religious considerations guides consumers. However, much remains to be done to make consumer choices more enlightened and geared towards supporting local producers and sustainable practices to strengthen local economies and ensure the sustainability of the meat industry in the region.

## Key recommendations

- 1. Food quality education:** Raising consumer awareness of the benefits of premium meats.
- 2. Increased support for local producers:** Increasing support for local producers to raise production standards and increase transparency.
- 3. Strengthening health standards:** Strengthening health standards to ensure product safety.
- 4. Promotion of sustainable practices:** Promotion of sustainable agricultural practices and organic certification.
- 5. Development of infrastructure for small producers:** Expansion of infrastructure to facilitate market access for small producers.
- 6. Marketing strategies adapted to cultural contexts:** Adapting marketing strategies to local cultural and religious preferences.

## Context

Meat consumption patterns in urban centres across West Africa are influenced by various factors ranging from sensory preferences to cultural and economic considerations. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for policymakers and stakeholders aiming to promote sustainable and health-oriented food choices while supporting local economies.

Commissioned by the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) within the framework of the Regional Sahel Pastoralism Support Project or PRAPS 2, the 'Analysis of the characteristics and models of meat consumption and demand in West Africa' study was conducted in 2023 jointly by researchers from the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and the Centre for International Cooperation in Agricultural Research for Development (CIRAD) in the 4,000 households in the capitals of Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria. Its main objective was to characterize and analyze current and future trends in meat consumption and demand and their sensitivity to price and income variations. This policy brief examines key quality conventions that shape consumer preferences for meat in Dakar, Abidjan, and Abuja, providing insights into opportunities to improve meat quality standards and promote informed consumer choices.

## Key results

1. **Organic quality:** Consumers prioritize sensory attributes such as taste, texture, freshness, and visual appeal when selecting meat products. They strongly prefer meats that are perceived as flavorful and visually appealing, reflecting the desire for high-quality sensory experiences in culinary practices.
2. **Market quality:** Price and accessibility significantly influence meat purchasing decisions. For example, consumers in Abidjan favor pork because of its affordability and widespread availability in local markets. Accessibility and ease of access to certain types of meat are crucial in determining consumer choices.
3. **Production quality:** Modern and hygienic production standards are crucial in consumers' perception of meat quality. Meat from facilities perceived as modern and hygienic is preferred, although there are concerns about the health implications of industrial production methods such as intensive livestock farming and chemical additives.
4. **Source quality:** Consumer trust and preference for locally sourced meats are high. Consumers value meats from traditional or local sources due to perceived safety, freshness, and support for local economies. This preference underscores the importance of promoting local meat production and improving transparency in the supply chain.
5. **Nutritional quality:** Consumers are increasingly aware of the dietary benefits of meats. There is a growing preference for meats perceived as healthier, such as those from animals fed naturally or labeled as organic. This trend reflects a broader shift toward health-oriented eating habits among urban populations.
6. **Civic and religious considerations:** Civic and religious considerations also influence meat choices. Consumers support local producers to boost local economies and comply with religious dietary laws, such as halal practices. Additionally, some consumers are inspired by ethical considerations, preferring meats from producers who prioritize animal welfare and sustainable farming practices.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following are policy recommendations to improve meat quality preferences among urban consumers in West Africa:

1. **Promote education and awareness raising:** Launch campaigns to educate consumers about the benefits of high-quality meats, including their sensory attributes, nutritional value, and local sourcing. Encourage the consumption of alternative proteins, such as fish and eggs, to diversify diets.
2. **Support meat producers:** Provide incentives and support programs to local meat producers to improve production standards, product labeling, and transparency in the supply chain.

- 3. Strengthen the regulatory framework:** Enforce hygiene standards in meat production facilities and ensure compliance with health and safety regulations. Ensure that consumers can verify and assess these control systems through clear and easily recognizable quality signs (e.g. inspection stamps, etc.).
- 4. Encourage sustainable practices:** Promote sustainable agricultural practices and organic certification to meet the growing demand for healthier, ethically produced meats. Use informative labels to inform consumers about the origin, breeding method, and slaughter date of meat, and at the same time, carry out information campaigns through the media and social networks to disseminate intelligible information for consumers.
- 5. Improve access to markets:** Facilitate market access for small-scale meat producers through infrastructure development, market linkages and financial assistance. This can be done directly through state action (public investments) or by encouraging private individuals to invest in the meat industry.
- 6. Promote cultural sensitivity:** Respect and integrate cultural and religious preferences into meat production and marketing strategies to meet the diverse needs of consumers.

## Conclusion

Improving meat quality preferences among urban consumers in West Africa requires a multifaceted approach that addresses sensory, economic, cultural, and health considerations. By promoting education, supporting local producers, strengthening regulatory standards, and encouraging sustainable practices, policymakers can foster a food environment that promotes consumer well-being, supports local economies and ensures the sustainability of the meat industry in the region.

### Authors

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