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**ILRI and CIRAD**

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# **Improving meat safety in West Africa**

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

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## Executive summary

Demand for meat in West Africa is growing, driven by urbanization, rising incomes, and changing dietary preferences. However, this growth comes with significant food safety challenges. Our study, based on in-depth surveys conducted with 4,000 households in Abidjan, Abuja, and Dakar and around twenty focus groups in each of these capitals, reveals gaps in slaughtering, transportation, and sales practices that put consumers' health at risk.

### Key recommendations

1. **Modernization of infrastructure:** Invest in modern slaughterhouses and refrigerated transport equipment to ensure hygiene and the cold chain for meat products.
2. **Strengthening regulations:** Establish and enforce strict hygiene and health safety standards at all stages of the value chain.
3. **Training and awareness:** Train industry players (breeders, butchers, sellers) in good hygiene practices and raise consumer awareness of the risks associated with unsanitary meat.
4. **Promotion of traceability:** Implement traceability systems to track the origin and journey of meat, thereby strengthening consumer confidence.
5. **Encourage consumption of substitutes:** Encourage the consumption of alternative proteins, such as fish and eggs, to reduce pressure on meat demand and diversify diets.

These recommendations aim to ensure a safe and quality meat supply, thus contributing to public health and economic development in the region.

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## Context

Sponsored by the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) within the framework of PRAPS 2, the study "Analysis of the characteristics and patterns of meat consumption and demand in West Africa" 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). It was carried out in 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.

## Key results

- **Improper slaughter and transportation:** Traditional slaughtering practices and the lack of refrigerated transport increase the risk of meat contamination.
- **Unsanitary conditions of sale:** Selling meat in open markets, where it is exposed to dust and flies, promotes the proliferation of bacteria.
- **Lack of traceability:** The origin of meat is often unknown, making it difficult to control its quality and safety.
- **Vulnerable consumers:** Low-income populations are particularly exposed to risks associated with unsafe meat, due to their limited access to quality products.
- **Consumer preferences:** Consumers value the freshness, taste and origin of meat, but are often constrained by high prices and a lack of information.

## Recommendations

1. **Modernizing slaughtering and transport infrastructure:** Invest in modern slaughterhouses that are equipped with hygienic slaughter lines and cold rooms, as well as in refrigerated transport vehicles to guarantee the cold chain. This can be done directly through state action (public investments) or by encouraging private individuals to invest in the meat industry.
2. **Strengthening regulation and control:** Establish and enforce strict hygiene and health safety standards at all stages of the meat industry, from breeding to sale. Strengthen veterinary and health controls, and punish violations. Ensuring that consumers can verify and assess these control systems through quality marks that are clear and easily recognizable (e.g. inspection stamps).

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3. **Train and raise awareness among industry players:** Provide training to farmers, butchers and vendors on good hygiene practices, safe meat handling and health risks. Raise consumer awareness of the dangers of unsafe meat and how to choose quality products. These trainings and awareness campaigns should not only rely on actually available and accessible resources, such as affordable hygiene products (gloves, bleach, etc.), but also take into account the weight that certain traditional practices and local beliefs could have on these meat handling techniques.
  4. **Implement traceability systems:** Develop traceability systems to track the origin and journey of meat from farm to plate. Use informative labels to inform consumers about the origin, breeding method and slaughter date of meat. Conduct information campaigns across the media and the social networks, in order to broadcast information intelligible to all sections of the population for the recognition and understanding of traceability signs.
  5. **Promote the consumption of substitutes:** Encourage the consumption of alternative proteins, such as fish and eggs, to reduce pressure on meat demand, diversify diets and improve food security. Promote the dissemination of new recipes to enhance the value of alternative protein sources in everyday household meals.

## Policy implications

Implementing these recommendations requires collaboration between governments, private sector actors and civil society organizations. Investments in infrastructure, training and awareness-raising are needed, as well as political will to strengthen regulation and control. The expected benefits are improved public health, reduced health costs related to foodborne illnesses, and increased consumer confidence in the meat supply chain. Economically, these actions would ensure a national supply of animal products based on diverse local products, thus reducing dependence on imports.

## Authors

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