

Final summary report of SUSPER (Sustainable Development of Peri-Urban Agriculture in South-East Asia)

Rapport final de SUSPER

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SUSPER

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which can be favourably grown during the hot wet season, was also enhanced during this season. Therefore, seasonality in food supply did not have significant impact in terms of nutrient availability. The implication is that policy makers should not worry about reducing seasonality in food supply, but rather should focus on improving the overall food supply to the city wherever and whenever possible. Trade and natural adjustment in the production system based on comparative advantage of different crops are efficient tools to tackle seasonality in food supply. Agriculturalists should aim to resolve the production problems of hot wet season crops, such as leafy vegetables and tropical fruits, rather than introducing new crops in this season and overcoming seasonality in a particular food item.

On average, there seems to be no serious nutrient deficiency in Hanoi and its surrounding population. Nevertheless, looking at individual families on a daily basis, a large number of families fall below the daily recommended intake levels of calcium, vitamin B1, vitamin B2, and niacin. A small proportion of the population are also deficient in calories, vitamin A and vitamin C. All regions and income levels have these deficiencies (although to small extent it varies across income groups and regions). This suggests that low incomes are not the only cause of nutrient deficiency. Lack of nutrient knowledge is also part of the problem. Therefore, to diversify food, efforts are required to improve the nutrient knowledge of the population. Policies can also play an important role in alleviating micronutrient deficiencies. For example, reducing the prices of seafood and vegetables, especially of water convolvulus, can reduce calcium deficiencies significantly.

2.3 Consumer Perception of Vegetable (Tomatoes and Water convolvulus) Quality in Hanoi

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A quantitative survey conducted in 2003 using 500 Hanoi consumers has allowed us to identify their perception of peri-urban vegetables. Following this, a qualitative survey, based on word association, has allowed us to identify with more detail the perception of those consumers in regards to the two most widely consumed vegetables: tomatoes and water convolvulus. Consumer perception is that a good tomato is one which is floury (a descriptive term meaning fleshy and dry rather than pulpy and moist), firm and fresh. Likewise, good water convolvulus comes from a pond and has slender stems and green leaves.

The study focused on quality perceptions of products from China, products from Dalat, peri-urban products, organic products, "safe" products, and products sold in supermarkets. The results of this study demonstrate that consumers appreciate these products their 'healthy' qualities on the one hand and their visual and organoleptic qualities on the other. Chinese products fall short on all counts. Supermarket products are highly desirable but are considered expensive. Organic and "safe" vegetables have bad visual and organoleptic qualities and "safe" vegetables do not inspire confidence. On the contrary, peri-urban produce has high visual and organoleptic qualities but are not considered healthy. Confidence in product quality is largely a function of the seller's image and the place of sale.

Among other conclusions, this report recommends that suppliers be extremely aware of the strong sense of value that consumers have for 'freshness'. Another recommendation is that the marketing chain of safe vegetables should work within its sphere of influence to improve visual quality.