

## INCREASE IN FOOD PRICES: IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTHY FAMILY LIVING IN NIGERIA

<sup>1</sup>Ruth Oluwabusayo, OYESODE, <sup>2</sup>E.E Uko-Aviomoh, <sup>3</sup>L.I. Salami

Department of Vocational and Technical Education

Faculty of Education

University of Benin, Benin City

[oyesodebusayo@gmail.com](mailto:oyesodebusayo@gmail.com)

+2348061691698

### Abstract

*In the past few years families have been subjected to both spikes and volatile situation of increase in prices of food, the implication of which families' welfare have been much debated in recent years. For most families, increase in food prices have a significant drain and impacts their healthy eating lifestyle. It is therefore important to examine the implications of increase in food prices on healthy family living. The concept of healthy family living, increase in food prices, causes of increase in food prices, implications of increase in prices of food on healthy family living were discussed. It was concluded that insurgencies bedeviling the country, especially in the Northern part and pockets of dissensions in some states where most of the essential food items for the nation come from, has led to low food supply and also contributed to the astronomical rise in food prices which has negatively affected healthy family living in Nigeria. It was therefore recommended that home gardening, bulk purchase, and use of foods in season should be encouraged.*

**Key Words:** Food Price Increase, healthy living, Families, Nigeria.

### Introduction

A family is a group of persons who are connected by blood or by affinity or adoption. It is a group that consists of parents and their children. It is also seen as a group of persons living together and having a shared commitment to a domestic relationship. This is the basic unit of a society which makes up the nation at large. It is a social group consisting of a father, mother and one or more children. It is the first agent of socialization a child is exposed to. All families are faced with challenges from time to time. Some common challenges families face include separation or divorce, parental issues, pressure at work or school, unemployment, financial problems, illness or disability of a family member, death of a family member, drug, alcohol, gambling addiction, domestic violence, neglect of responsibilities, influence of in-laws, poverty and food insecurity (Uko-Aviomoh, 2015).

In Nigeria, about 25 million people suffer from food insecurity of which several factors have driven this. These include civil conflicts, large-scale displacement, climate change, natural resource degradation, poverty, population growth and increase in food prices (UNICEF, 2023). In the last decade, the world prices of many staple food commodities have increased considerably, experiencing large spikes in the circumstances and raising widespread concern about the potential impacts on Healthy family living. In 2007-2008, the World Bank Food price Index rose by 60%; few months after a significant decrease in 2008-2010, the World Bank Food Price Index increased sharply reaching its peak in early 2011. Then, in mid-2012 the World Bank Food Price

Index exceeded its 2008 and 2011 peaks (World Bank, 2014). Available statistics have shown that on average, food prices have been increasing. According to Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)(2013), the average annual food inflation rate in Nigeria dropped steadily from 23.1% in December to 1.5% in November 2007 and it rose in response to the global food crisis of 2007-2008 to 15.3% in November 2008 and was as high as 17.9% by April 2009. Moreover, the average annual food inflation rate in the country remained as high as 12.9% between January 2009 and December 2013 (Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), 2013). However, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2022) observed that food inflation rose from 9.02% in May 2015 to 15.70% in December 2016 and was as high as 20.32% in October 2017 and 20.25% in August 2017, rose to 21.47 in November 2022 and 21.34% in December 2022. The upsurge in food prices is borne more by the poor and vulnerable families who spend up to 80% or more of their earnings on foodstuffs (Obayelu, 2010). When families are faced with massive negative price or income shocks, reduction in food budget is often the most immediate response (Ayinde, Akerele, Adewuyi & Oladapo, 2012).

This manifests in compromised dietary intakes in terms of quantity and quality which ultimately engender higher vulnerability to food insecurity, malnutrition, poverty, depreciation in health outcomes which negatively impacts their healthy living. In the past few years families have been subjected to both spikes and unpredictable condition of increase in food prices, which has greatly affected family's welfare in recent years. Increase in food prices can be a significant drain on healthy family living and impacts family's healthy eating lifestyle. It is therefore important to examine the implication of increase in food prices on healthy family living while highlighting its challenges and the way forward.

### **Concept of Healthy Family Living**

A family is defined as two or more people who are committed to each other and who share intimacy, resources, decision-making responsibilities, and values (Olson, & DeFrain. (2003). A family provides its individual members with key resources for healthful living, including food, clothing, shelter, a sense of self-worth, and access to medical care (Ani, 2021). A healthy lifestyle is a way of living that lowers the risk of being seriously ill or dying early. Not all diseases are preventable, but a large proportion of deaths, particularly those from coronary heart disease and lung cancer, can be avoided. Scientific studies have identified certain types of behaviour that contribute to the development of non-communicable diseases and early death. Health is not just about avoiding disease. It is also about physical, mental and social wellbeing (World Health Organization, 1999).

One of the ways a family can live healthy is by eating right. The food we eat gives our bodies the "information" and materials they need to function properly. The nutrients in food enable the cells in our bodies to perform their necessary functions. Nutrients are the nourishing substances in food that are essential for the growth, development and maintenance of body functions. When nutrient intake does not regularly meet the nutrient needs dictated by the cell activity, the metabolic processes suffer thereby leading to declines in health status. Also, too much of food, or food that gives our bodies the wrong instructions can harm ones healthy living thereby resulting in the development of diseases and conditions, such as arthritis, diabetes, and heart disease. In short, what we eat is central to our health (Wardlow & Insel, 1997).

When a healthy lifestyle is adopted, a more positive role model is provided for other people in the family. Particularly, in children it is necessary to give your children

building blocks for a healthy lifestyle by teaching them the importance of good nutrition and regular physical activity. Eating well and being physically active every day are keys to a child's health and well-being. Eating too many high calorie foods and getting too little physical activity can lead to excessive weight gain and physical health problems, such as type II diabetes and high blood pressure, now being diagnosed in children. Obesity also is associated with an increased risk of other health problems such as depression. (Herforth, Jones, Pinstруп-Andersen,2012)

Parents have the power to set examples by making healthy eating and daily physical activity fun in the family by helping their children learn and develop healthy eating habits at an early age, such that will last a lifetime. This will help children grow strong and give them energy. Children should be made to understand that good health depends on the right balance between what they eat and how much they move or exercise their body. Healthy family living is therefore the practice of health enhancing behaviors among members of a family. It implies the physical, mental and spiritual capacity to make healthy choices (Uko-Aviomoh, 2022)

The keys to Healthy family living are that of variety, balance and moderation in eating. Family members must make efforts to eat a variety of foods, including plenty of vegetables, fruits and whole grain products. This also include eating of low-fat and non-fat dairy products, lean meats, poultry, fish and legumes (lentils and beans) as well as drink lots of water to quench thirst. They should equally eat less of salt, sugar and saturated fat. Good nutrition should be part of an overall healthy lifestyle that also includes regular physical activity. To maintain weight, both kids and adults must balance the calories they eat with the calories they burn through physical activity. There should be commitment to helping every member of the family to eat sensibly and move more often owing to the fact that continuous eating of more calories than what is being used up in physical activity, leads to weight gain. Eating fewer calories than what which is being used up, leads to weight loss (Oloyede, 2021). However the major challenge for eating responsibly has been increase in food prices.

### **Increase in Food Prices**

Increase in food prices means upsurge in average price level for food across countries, regions and on a global scale due to global supply and demands, exchange rates, higher cost of production and transportation, weather and natural disaster (Uko-Aviomoh, 2021)

Increase in food prices implies buying less for more money or a situation in which food becomes expensive. For many families in countries around the world, the global upsurge in the prices of food has been a cause of worry and given rise to uncomfortable changes in their dining rooms. Food items that once were taken for granted since they were almost readily available, have now become luxury items - served only when it can be afforded but sparingly all the same - and in some families, some of these food items have disappeared from their menus and replaced with cheaper substitutes. (Igbinaduwa & Uko-Aviomoh, 2022).

Recently, the Food and Agricultural Organization, (2021) in its monthly FAO Food Price Index report noted that food commodity prices in May 2021 rose at the fastest monthly rate in more than a decade. Also, the United States Department of Agriculture in a 2020 report stated that 10.5 per cent (13.8million) American households were unable to acquire enough food to meet the needs of all their members because they had insufficient money or other resources for food. This situation, they noted, affected about 584,000 children (0.8 per cent of the nation's children), leading to malnourishment (Ani, 2021).

The crises have in turn created a burden on many Nigerian households since the food consumed in other states are largely produced in the North; they now have to go out of their way to balance the nutritional deficiencies imposed on them by scarce food items and ever-rising food prices. In a survey carried out by Ani, (2021) in many markets across the country, it was found that staple food commodities witnessed astronomical price increases. Findings showed that within one year, the cost of 50kg of beans rose by about 253 per cent; a basket of tomatoes increased by 123 per cent, while the price of 50kg of rice rose by 51.48 per cent. Also, the composite food index (a measure of food inflation) rose to 21.83 per cent in June, according to the National Bureau of Statistics, (2020). The NBS report in 2020 also stated that in June of that year, about 30 per cent of households in the country experienced severe food insecurity owing to lack of money or other resources as food inflation rose to as high as 15.18 per cent, an increase which was caused by a hike in prices of bread and cereals, potatoes, yam and other tubers, fruits, oils and fats, meat, fish and vegetables, but by August that same year, the figure had increased, as 68 per cent of Nigerian households suffered food insecurity. The NBS reported that the composite food index rose by 20.30 per cent in August compared to 21.03 per cent recorded in July 2021. The report stated that the rise in food inflation in August was driven by increase in the prices of bread and cereals, milk, cheese and egg, oils and fats, potatoes, yam and other tuber, meat and coffee, tea and cocoa (Ani, 2021).

The World Bank estimated that Nigeria's soaring inflation and food prices had pushed another seven million people into poverty in 2020. It was reported that food prices have increased more than 22 percent since the start of the corona virus crisis, according to official statistics. These conditions have affected many homes to the extent that feeding the family has become a daily challenge. Every day, consultation report showed that there are five or seven children that suffer from malnutrition. This means that in few months or year more children will be malnourished. Even before the pandemic and the surge in food costs, Nigeria's nutrition figures were alarming: One in three Nigerian children suffered stunted growth due to bad diet; one in 10 is wasted. As a result, close to 17 million children in Nigeria are estimated to be undernourished, giving the country the highest level of malnutrition in Africa and second highest in the world. Report on the recent market survey showed that the high-priced goods have in turn yielded negative impacts both on the sellers and buyers. A trader, who sells groceries and provisions in the market lamented that "price of a bag of milk has gone up from N3,500 to N11,000; a carton of noodles from N850 to N2,500; The loaf of bread from bakers at N150, now sells for a double price because of the high cost of the flour, milk and sugar and so on (Ogunsola, 2021).

### **Implications of increase in food prices on healthy family living in Nigeria.**

A family is any combination of two or more persons who are bound together over times by ties of mutual consent, birth and/ or adoption or placement and who, together, assume responsibilities for variant combinations of some of the following: physical maintenance and care of group members, addition of new members through procreation or adoption, socialization of children, social control of members, affective nurturance, production, consumption, distribution of goods and services (Vanier Institute, 2013) . Family health is a state in which the family is a resource for the day-to-day living and health of its members. In order to maintain good family health, factors such as purchase and intake of good quality food cannot be over emphasized. However, the major challenge to this is increase in food prices.

According to Okuneye, (2001), food prices have continued to rise which resulted to the problems of malnutrition, household food insecurity and restricted access to

nutritious and sufficient food, culminating in greater effects of poverty on many families. This phenomenon is mainly due to poor transportation, storage and processing facilities apart from rise in population. Increase in food prices may lead to change in food consumption patterns for mothers and children. They may engage in buying less nutritious foods, eat less preferred foods or fewer meals, and eat with neighbours or even skip meals. In some cultures with strong son preferences, reduction in food consumption patterns is likely to be specially negative for girls. Adolescent girls need higher intake of iron rich foods to maintain their iron balance during menstruation. Iron intake is also of concern for adolescent girls, especially risk of anaemia.

Increase in food prices increase family expenditure on foods resulting in reduced spending on basic services, such as health and education. Some families are not able to break even and may pull their children out of school which is more likely to be daughters in families where preference for girl child education is low and in some families it is their sons due to the energy they have in doing hard labour. Increased expenditure on food due to increased food prices can also lead to limited access to health care, vaccinations, medicines due to poverty.

Feeding the family has become a daily challenge for some families. Every day, during consultations, there are five or seven children that suffer from malnutrition (Baker, 2008). Even before the pandemic and the surge in food costs, Nigeria's nutrition figures were alarming: One in three Nigerian children suffered stunted growth due to a bad diet. Rising food prices can have multiple, negative, long-term impact on a household's well-being and future human capital. (Baker, 2008)

Increase in food prices apart from leading to decrease in purchasing power of the poor families, the composition of their diet worsens, and their food consumption may decrease. These changes directly affect all targets of Millenium Developmental Goal (MDG). Malnutrition affects early childhood development and makes children more likely to drop out of School. An increase in food prices affects women and girls' consumption disproportionately undernutrition is linked directly to more than one third of children's deaths each year. (Hoddinott & Kinsey, 2001). Pregnant women face heightened maternal mortality, through increased anemia, during a food price crisis. Under nutrition weakens the immune system and compounds the effect of diarrhea and waterborne diseases. Higher food prices have weakened intergovernmental coordination in food markets affecting healthy family living. (Hoddinott & Kinsey, 2001).

Higher food prices may make it more difficult to achieve most MDGs. Food price increase affects food consumption, quality of one's diet, access to social services, and sometimes the quality of care for infants and young children. All these factors may increase undernutrition among children (and decrease their learning capacity and survival rates), for adult women (and if they are pregnant, increase their chances of maternal mortality and affect fetal growth and future outcomes), and adult men (and affect their productive capacity). In addition, undernutrition decreases the efficacy of treatments for HIV/AIDS and other major diseases. Conservative estimates from Grantham-McGregor and others (2007) suggest that over 200 million children under five years of age living in developing countries fail to reach their cognitive development potential because of risks linked to poverty, poor health and undernutrition and lack of stimulation at home. Save the Children (2022) estimated that the recent food price hike put six million children's lives at risk. Food prices also affect Food security and nutrition security. Food security, an important input for improved nutrition outcomes, is concerned with physical and economic access to food of sufficient quality and quantity in a socially and culturally acceptable manner. Nutrition security is an outcome of good

health, a healthy environment, and good caring practices as well as household food security (World Bank 2006).

Most times mothers are responsible for family meal preparation and service. A mother may have reliable access to the components of a healthy diet, but because of poor health or improper care, lack of knowledge, gender, or personal preferences, she may be unable, or choose not, to use the food in a nutritionally sound manner, thereby becoming nutritionally insecure. As prices rise, households will first try to replace expensive foods with cheaper sources of calories, moving from some food categories or shifting to lower-quality foods. When prices increase further and substitution is not enough, households decrease their caloric consumption. In the first adjustment, poor consumers shift from foods such as meats, fish, vegetables, and fruits to staple foods, such as cereals and tubers, and their protein and micronutrient intake may suffer. Young children and during their early years who have high nutrient needs for iron, vitamin A, and zinc, among others, may be particularly at risk and will bear long term impacts of this “hidden hunger.” In the second adjustment, households decrease their caloric consumption—urban households in Pakistan (Friedman, Hong, and Hou 2011) and poor households in Haiti (World Bank 2010), for example—and the number of children with low weight for age increases.

The major causes of increase in food prices in Nigeria range from the misdirection of government funds to the agricultural sector, poor implementation of interventions by the Federal Government and multiple taxation on inter-state food transportation by the federal, state, and local governments. Also topping the list of factors responsible for the hikes in the prices of food items and cooking gas is the worsening insecurity in the country, especially in Northern Nigeria, about 85 percent of foodstuffs consumed in cities like Lagos and other states in the South-West come from the North.

Traders at the Oyingbo, Mile 12 and Ketu markets in Lagos, for example, get their food supplies from the North. Each day many vehicles laden with food items often find their way to those markets and they are seen offloading a variety of farm produce, such as tomatoes, pepper, onions, yams and potatoes and livestock. In Nigeria with the insecurity across the country, many farmers have been forced to abandon their farms and homes and flee for safety elsewhere. Some of them have ended up in Internally Displaced Persons camps, some were killed, kidnapped or raped. Others have found themselves and their families facing a lifetime of bondage in the hands of bandits who have forced them to pay taxes and other levies in return for access to their farms (Obuh, Uko-Aviomoh & Ohanaka, 2016). This is in addition to inflation and a high unemployment rate, with one-third of the labour force unemployed at the end of 2020. All of these culminate in increased production costs, which in turn influence the final costs of goods and services and affect healthy family living (Onuorah, 2021).

## **Conclusion**

The continuing rise in prices of food has negatively affected healthy family living in Nigeria. The poor, the unemployed and other weaker sections of the population continues to suffer while the rich families do not really feel the impact. Insurgencies bedeviling the country, especially in the Northern part and pockets of dissensions in some states where most of the essential food items for the nation come from, has led to low food supply and also contributed to the astronomical rise in food prices. The effect on the growth of the economy at large is devastating. This has raised a major concern among all stakeholders in nutrition education. However, government at local, state and federal level should take the opportunity to come up with fiscal and health policy actions that will

ensure standardized food price assessment, monitoring and surveillance towards equitable affordability of healthy food for its citizens.

### Recommendations

From the foregoing, the following recommendations were made:

1. Home gardening should be encouraged.
2. Seminars, workshop and awareness on nutrition education should be carried out to the populace at large.
3. Use of foods in season which are cheaper should be taken into consideration when planning meals.
4. Bulk purchase of food or commodities should be practiced.

### References

- Ani, P. (2021, September 19). More Nigerian families join undernourished population amid rising food prices, conflicts. *The Punch*. Retrieved from <https://www.punch.com> more-nigerian-families-join-
- Ayinde, I. A., Akerele, D., Adewuyi, S. A. & Oladapo, M. O. (2012). Can food calorie be an index for poverty in a rural economy? An extrapolation from farm households in Ogun State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Consumers Studies*, 36 (6), 688-695.
- Baker J.L. (2008 ). Impact of financial, food, and fuel crisis on the urban poor. Washington DC: World Bank,
- Central Bank of Nigeria(CBN) (2013). Quartely Statistical Bulletin, 2(1) March 2013 – Tables. CBN, Abuja, Nigeria. Available at: <http://cenbank.org/documents/statbulletin.asp>
- FAO (2004). *The state of food insecurity in the World 2004*. Rome: FAO.
- Friedman, J., S. Y. Hong, and X. Hou.(2011)The Impact of the Food Price Crisis on Consumption and Caloric Availability in Pakistan: Evidence from Repeated Cross-Sectional and Panel Data. *HNP Discussion Paper*, World Bank, Washington, DC.
- Grantham-McGregor S., Y. B. Cheung, S. Cueto, P. Glewwe, L. Richter and B. Strupp. (2007). Development Potential in the First Five Years for Children in Developing Countries. *Lancet*.369, ( 9555): 60–70.
- Herforth, A., Jones, A., Pinstруп-Andersen, P. (2012). Prioritizing nutrition in agriculture and rural development: Guiding principles for operational investment. *HNP Discussion Paper*. Washington DC: World Bank.
- Hoddinott, J. and B. Kinsey. (2001) Child Growth in the Time of Drought. *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics* 63(4) 409–36.
- Igbinaduwa, O.E. & Uko-Aviomoh, E.E (2022). Responsible eating and Rejuvenation for Healthy Retirement. *Nigerian Journal of Home Economics* 10, 7, 268-274
- National Bureau of Statistics (NBS)(2022). CPI and Inflation Report. Retrieved from <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/read/1241274>
- Obayelu, A. E. (2010). Global food price increases and nutritional status of Nigerians: The Determinants. *Coping Strategies, Policy Responses and Implications*, *ARPN Journal of Agricultural and Biological Science*, 5 (2), 67-80.
- Obuh, J. I., Uko-Aviomoh E.E. & Ohanaka,J. (2016). Boko Haram: A Threat to Food Security in Nigeria. *Nigeria Journal of Education, Health and Technology Research* 8, 237-247
- Ogunsola, E. (2021). Nigeria: Families struggle to survive as food prices soar. In *AfricanNews* Retrieved from <https://www.africannews.com/2021/04/07/Families->

- Okuneye, P. A. (2001): "Rural Poverty Assessment and Control in Africa" An Invited Specialization Course Paper Presented at the United Nations IDEP, Dakar, Senegal, June 19-22.
- Oloyede, J. (2021). Nutritionists decry rising nutritional deficiency. In Punch Retrieved from <https://www.punch.com/2021/19/09/nutritionists-decry>
- Olson, D. H., & DeFrain, J. (2000). Marriage and the family: Diversity and strengths (3rd ed.). Mayfield Publishing Co.
- Onourah, J. (2021, November 28) Hard Times Await Nigerian Families Over Rising Food Prices. The Will, p4
- Save the Children (2022). Photo Series: Rising Food Costs Reflected on our Plates Uko-Aviomoh, E.E. (2015) Family Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, A Myth or Reality? *International Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences*, 4, 103-111
- Uko-Aviomoh, E.E. (2021) Ensuring Sustainable Healthy Family Living in an unstable Economy. A Keynote Address Presented at the 2021 Annual Conference Organised by society for Home Economists held on 22<sup>nd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> June at University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Benue State.
- Uko-Aviomoh, E.E. (2022) Family Living, Family Life Cycle and Retirement in the New Normal Era. *Nigeria Journal of Home Economics*, 10, 7, 5-8
- United Nations International Children Emergency Fund. (2023). *25 million Nigerians are at high risk of food insecurity*. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/25-million-nigerians-high-risk-food-insecurity-2023>
- Vanier Institute. (2013). *The definition of family*. Retrieved from The Vanier Institute of the Family: [http://www.vanierinstitute.ca/definition\\_of\\_family](http://www.vanierinstitute.ca/definition_of_family)
- Wardlow, P. M. & Insel, G. M. (1997). *Perspectives in Nutrition, Get examples of food as information*. Retrieved from [https://www.amazon.com/perspectives in nutrition/](https://www.amazon.com/perspectives-in-nutrition/)
- World Bank (2006). *Repositioning Nutrition as Central to Development*. Washington D.C.: World Bank.
- World Bank (2010). *Promoting Nutrition Security in Haiti. An Assessment of Pre- and PostEarthquake Conditions and Recommendations for the Way Forward.* World Bank, Washington, DC.
- World Bank (2012). *Global Monitoring Report: Food Prices, Nutrition, and the Millennium Development Goals*. Washington DC: World Bank.
- World Bank (2014). *Food Price Watch Poverty Global Practice the World Bank Group*. Retrieved from: [www.worldbank.org/poverty](http://www.worldbank.org/poverty) (18), 1-10.
- World Health Organization (1999). *Healthy living: what is a healthy lifestyle?* Retrieved from <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/108180>.