

F-07 Food consumption pattern of a rural community: a case study

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The main objective of this study was to ascertain the present status of food consumption pattern of a rural community. It can be assumed that with the change of family income, education level and occupation, the nutritional standards of the households tend to improve. On the other hand with the increase of household size the nutritional standards tend to decrease. Therefore, factors affecting food consumption and comparison of nutritional intake of diet in relation to recommended nutrition requirement were also investigated as secondary objectives.

Three rural villages (Gangodagama, Kongala and Mealla) in Matara district were selected for the study. The field investigation was conducted during the period July-August 1996. The adequacy level was the indicator used to evaluate the nutritional level. The adequacy level means the ratio between actual consumption and theoretical requirement for the same reference period. The results are as follows. The staple diet was rice and curry. The major animal food resources were fish and dried fish while the meat, milk and egg consumption was in low level. Further, consumption of fruits as a dessert was not satisfactory.

According to the results, 24% of the respondents were below 75% energy adequacy level and 12% of the respondents were below 75% protein adequacy level. Further, 45% of the sample population were confined to 75-85% of energy adequacy category and 48% of the sample population showed 75-90% protein adequacy level. Majority of the sample population had about 80-100% vitamin A adequacy level. When the status of Ca and Fe were considered, 20% of sample population had 100% adequacy level. It can be concluded that the nutritional level of the surveyed population was lower than that of required level.

With respect to the factors effecting food consumption, the following results were obtained. With the significant increase of income, energy and protein adequacy levels have shown an increasing trend. The energy adequacy levels has increased to 100% when the monthly income increased to Rs. 5000. Further, results demonstrate that there is a positive relationship between mothers' education and the energy adequacy level. The households whose mothers had no education or primary education was below 75% of energy adequacy level. In most families mothers have obtained secondary education. In such situation, their energy adequacy level was about 81%. Moreover, investigation revealed that professionals were well nourished when compared to households of farm families. Households who hire labour were at high risk of becoming malnourished. When the household size was larger than 10 members, energy adequacy level has decreased to 64%. In contrast, when the household size was 1-3, energy adequacy level was 80%. However there is a significant relationship between household size and energy adequacy level.