
Abstract: 300 words (300 max)

Background: Ghana’s Northern Region—where 73.5% of adults are smallholder farmers—experiences high rates of poverty, food insecurity, and childhood malnutrition (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013; Malapit & Quisumbing, 2014). The USAID-funded Feed the Future Soybean Innovation Lab’s activities in this region are focused on assisting smallholder soybean farmers with improved household food security and sustainable agricultural production.

Methods: We compare results from the Household Hunger Scale (HHS; Ballard et al., 2011) administered to smallholder farmers in four Northern Region districts during two hunger periods: T1) May 2014 (N=675), which begins the hunger season, and T2) June-July 2016 (N=832), in which hunger peaks in the Northern Region. The HHS categorizes household-level hunger (HLH) in the past 4 weeks as occasional, moderate, or severe for three hunger events (HE): HE1) No food to eat of any kind in household due to lack of resources, HE2) Household member(s) went to sleep hungry due to lack of food, and HE3) Household member(s) went all day/night without food.

Results: Contrary to expectations, HLH was lower for T2 than T1. For T1, 32.7% reported HE1, 31% reported HE2, and 24.8% reported HE3. For T2, 21.9% reported HE1, 19.7% reported HE2, and 14.4% reported HE3. HLH differed significantly across districts for T1 and T2, but the most effected districts changed over time. For T1, HLH was highest in Chereponi and Saboba, and lowest in Karaga and Tolon. For T2, HLH remained highest in Chereponi, increased in Tolon, and was lowest in Saboba and Karaga.

Discussion: Household-level hunger data collected at different points in time can detect household-level responses to environmental shocks and recoveries that may differentially affect regional hunger. However, to gain more complete insights into patterns of hunger, interpretations of results should be locally contextualized to include cultural and environmental events that occur during data collection.

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Learning Objectives: Describe results from Household Hunger Scale, which was part of two separate surveys administered in 2014 and 2016 to men and women smallholder farmers in four districts in Ghana’s Northern Region. The surveys include: 1) Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index + Household Hunger Scale + Soybean Cultivation Modules (WEAI+Wave I) (N=675), and 2) Soybean Uptake & Network Survey + Household Hunger Scale (SUNS Wave I) (N=832). Analyze the Household Hunger Scale results disaggregated by gender and district in order to explore whether specific household-level hunger events differed across surveys, districts, and genders. Discuss implications as to whether the Household Hunger Scale may be an appropriate measure for assessing variations in “hunger periods” in food-insecure countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Discuss importance of being mindful of local cultural and environmental events when interpreting complex hunger events.

Target Audiences: Social/behavioral researchers and CHES who conduct research and program evaluations to address global health, food insecurity, gender empowerment, and maternal and child health in in food-insecure countries in sub-Saharan Africa; Public health leaders, social/behavioral researchers, CHES, and policy makers involved in health initiatives to enhance health/nutrition education programs, reduce food insecurity, and promote rural development efforts targeting vulnerable women and children in in food-insecure countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Keywords: Food Security, Gender
Geographic Focus: Africa
Related Web Page: http://soybeaninnovationlab.illinois.edu/

Learning Areas:
Conduct evaluation related to programs, research, and other areas of practice
Diversity and culture
Other professions or practice related to public health
Planning of health education strategies, interventions, and programs
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