BRINGING FOOD HOME:
A STUDY ON THE CHANGING NATURE OF HOUSEHOLD INTERACTION
WITH URBAN FOOD MARKETS IN ACCRA, GHANA

by

NATHANIEL DJANMAH AGUDA

A thesis submitted to the Department of Geography
in conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
April 2009

Copyright © Nathaniel Djanmah Aguda, 2009
ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the changing nature of food provisioning in the contemporary Third World city, employing the experience of Accra, Ghana, as a case study. The issue is studied by examining changes that are occurring within urban food markets, and how households are altering their food acquisition patterns in response to structural changes within the city. The investigation provides an in-depth analysis of the policy framework and socio-economic context for the delivery of, and access to, food in Accra, and probes the food situation as a window to investigate broader issues relating to poverty, livelihoods, and coping strategies within a Third World city.

Data were collected from three markets and six residential neighbourhoods through focus group discussions and personal interviews. The investigation reveals that the food system has been altered by processes of transformation occurring in the city, with dire implication for access to food by the poor. The activities of traders in maintaining the urban food supply emphasize the dominance of individual initiatives in sustaining the city. The household surveys show that the level of direct engagement between households and the food market is waning, as households increasingly source their food from city’s various food outlets. This does not mean that food markets are losing their significance in the food supply chain. They remain the nexus between the source of supply (farmstead or port) and the urban household consumer.

This case study indicates that urban economic restructuring is translated into the lives of residents by altering how people meet their needs. It illustrates how individuals and households adopt new ways of engaging their changing environment and navigating the landscape in order to survive. The coping strategies adopted highlight the resilience
of vulnerable groups to this precarious urban landscape. These people are not passive victims to the constraints they face. Their responses to crisis make them active participants in the transformation of the city. The study concludes that understanding how the poor organize themselves to meet their challenges is key to understanding any interventions that are designed to tackle urban poverty or improve access to basic needs in the city.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants”

My most sincere appreciation goes to my thesis supervisor, Dr. J. Barry Riddell, for his excellent supervision, guidance, and patience. His invaluable advice was very critical to the successful completion of this thesis. My relationship with him during my time at Queen’s morphed from just a supervisor into a friend and mentor. Barry, you are a great man! I am also grateful to the members of my qualifying examination and thesis committees, Dr. Brain Osborne, Dr. Joyce Davidson, Dr. David McDonald, Dr. Steve Gyimah, and my external examiner, Dr. Tony Weis for their insightful comments and valuable feedback. My deep appreciation goes to the Geography Department and Queen’s University for funding my studies. The assistance provided by Sheila MacDonald, Joan Knox, Kathy Hoover, and Sharon Mohammed is greatly appreciated.

I am very grateful to the International Development Research Centre for awarding me the research grant that funded the field study. I received valuable assistance during the fieldwork, and I am very grateful to all who made my fieldwork a success. I am particularly grateful to Prof. Alex Asiedu and Prof. P.W.K. Yankson, Department of Geography and Resource Development, University of Ghana for hosting me and providing all the guidance and assistance needed to complete the fieldwork. My able research assistants, Isaac Ter-ibinibe Sopelle, Emmanuel Ewoo, and Henry Tagoe deserve special mention. Their knowledge, commitment, and hard work made the fieldwork less onerous for me. My special thanks go to Mr. Edward Asuo Afram, Ghana

1 From Newton’s letter to Hooke on 5th February, 1676
Statistical Service; Madam Vivian, Accra Metropolitan Assembly; Mr. Emmanuel Nyamadi, FAO Library, Accra; and Mr. Yawson, Food Research Institute of the Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research for providing valuable information and leads. To the numerous respondents who subjected themselves to our pestering questions, I say a big thank you for your time and sharing your knowledge, expertise, and experiences with us. You made the fieldwork a very pleasant experience for me, and this dissertation is your story re-told. I only hope I told it right.

I owe a dept of gratitude to my family for their sacrifice and support during my education. I am deeply indebted to my parents Jacob and Rebecca for their prayers and encouragement through the years. I cannot say thank you enough to my dear wife Akosua for her love, dedication, and especially her editorial prowess. To my precious children, Kwenorkie, and Kwenortey, thanks for hanging in there and accommodating an “almost absent dad”. I promise to make up for those moments. I also wish to express my deepest gratitude to my very good friend and mentor Dr. Godwin Arku for his friendship and advice. My thanks go to my many friends who have been faithful compatriots along the way, especially Evans, Wacko, Abed, Ernest, David, and Richard. I am also grateful to Mrs. Jessie Wong at the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term for her priceless advice and words of encouragement.

I am thankful to God Almighty for his provision and the strength to complete this journey. The road was long, but I know He was with me every step of the way. *Ebenezer, biɛ Nyɔŋmɔ ye buawɔ keba shi; Ebenezer, Edromo keke ni!* Finally, I thank all the giants on whose shoulders I have stood, those on whose shoulders I am standing, and those on whose shoulders I will stand. May God bless you all!
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Jacob, Rebecca, Akosua, Kwenorkie, and Kwenortey, in appreciation of your prayers, sacrifice, patience, love, and encouragement that saw me through this long and arduous journey. May God richly bless and reward you!
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.............................................................................................................................. i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................ iii
DEDICATION .......................................................................................................................... v
TABLE OF CONTENTS ........................................................................................................ vi
LIST OF TABLES ................................................................................................................... viii
LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................ ix

CHAPTER ONE- INTRODUCTION .................................................................................... 1
1.0 The Issue ................................................................................................................... 1
1.1 Situating the Research Questions .............................................................................. 4
1.1.1 Inter-Linkages Between the Research Questions and Universal Issues .............. 8
1.1.2 The Marketplace and its Access ......................................................................... 10
1.2 Scope and Significance of the Study ......................................................................... 11
1.3 Study Outline .......................................................................................................... 13

CHAPTER TWO- CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATION, THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK, AND RESEARCH APPROACH ......................................................................................... 15
2.0 Introduction ............................................................................................................. 15
2.1 Research Context .................................................................................................... 16
2.1.1 The Development Conundrum and the Third World Food Problem .............. 17
2.1.2 Transformation of the Urban Landscape and its Impact of Food Systems .......... 25
2.2 Theoretical Framework: Entitlement and Vulnerability ......................................... 30
2.3 Research Approach and Strategy ............................................................................ 34
2.3.1 Spatial Setting ..................................................................................................... 36
2.3.2 Research Methodology ....................................................................................... 41
2.3.3 Site Selection and Data Collection ..................................................................... 44
2.3.4 Ethical Concerns and Re-Presenting Actors’ Voices .......................................... 52
2.4 Conclusion .............................................................................................................. 54

CHAPTER THREE- FOOD MARKETING IN ACCRA .................................................. 56
3.0 Introduction ............................................................................................................. 56
3.1 Institutional Framework and Policy Environment .................................................. 57
3.1.1 Institutional and Infrastructural Challenges of Food Marketing in Accra .......... 60
3.1.2 Conflicts and Negotiations Over Space ............................................................. 64
3.2 The “Market Dynamics”: Players and Produce ....................................................... 68
3.2.1 Market Queens and Market Associations .......................................................... 69
3.2.2 Products, Pricing and Selling ........................................................................... 73
3.3 Informal Food Enterprises ...................................................................................... 76
3.4 Conclusion .............................................................................................................. 81
CHAPTER FOUR - VOICES FROM THE GROUND: WHAT MARKET TRADERS ARE SAYING .................................................................83

4.0 Introduction ..................................................................................83
4.1 Food Traders in the Urban Economy: Making Ends Meet or Feeding the City? ....84
4.1.1 Food Availability ......................................................................86
4.1.2 Job Security in the Food Business ...........................................91
4.1.3 Impact on Trading in the Major Markets ...................................95
4.2 Tales of Survival: Staying in Business at the Market .......................97
4.2.1 Case Study I: Agbogbloshie Market .......................................98
4.2.2 Case Study II: Madina Market .................................................105
4.2.3 Case Study III: Achimota Market ..........................................109
4.3 Voices of Discontent: Lessons From the Markets ..........................115
4.4 Active Players or Passive Victims: Examining the Role of Traders in Food Marketing in Accra .........................................................118
4.5 Conclusion ..................................................................................121

CHAPTER FIVE - BRINGING FOOD HOME: CASE STUDIES ON HOUSEHOLD FOOD ACQUISITION STATEGIES IN ACCRA ..........................................................123

5.0 Introduction ..................................................................................123
5.1 Household Food Sources and Consumption Patterns in Accra ............124
5.2 Reliability of Accra’s Food Markets ..............................................131
5.3 Household Food Acquisition Patterns in the City ...........................135
5.4 Discussion: Towards a New Geography of Food Acquisition in Accra ....140
5.5 Enhancing Household Access to Food in the City ...........................144
5.6 Conclusion ..................................................................................147

CHAPTER SIX - PERSPECTIVES ON LIVELIHOODS, POVERTY, AND FOOD PROVISIONING IN ACCRA ..........................................................149

6.0 Introduction ..................................................................................149
6.1 Reconfiguring the Landscape: Actors and Processes (Re)Shaping the City.....150
6.2 Juggling and Straddling: Responding to the Challenges City Living .......154
6.3 Conclusion ..................................................................................160

CHAPTER SEVEN - SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION ..........................................................162

BIBLIOGRAPHY ..................................................................................167

APPENDIX I: AMA CLASSIFICATION OF RESIDENTIAL AREAS ....................182
APPENDIX II: QUALITATIVE/QUANTITATIVE PARADIGMS .....................183
APPENDIX III: GUIDES FOR INTERVIEWS/FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS ....184
APPENDIX IV: SAMPLE LETTERS OF INTRODUCTION AND CONSENT .......186
LIST OF TABLES

Table:

1.1- Projected Level of Food Consumption in Selected Third World Cities ...... 2
1.2- Summary of Research Questions and Universal Issues .......................... 9
2.1- Incidence of Poverty in Ghana (per cent) ........................................ 19
2.2- Comparing Urbanization Trends in Selected High- and Low-Income Countries ................................................................. 26
2.3- Research Methodology ................................................................. 43
2.4- Key Research Sites ....................................................................... 45
3.1- Market Fees for Selected Food Wholesaler, 2001 and 2004 ............... 72
4.1- Traders’ Challenges and Strategies, Agbogbloshie Market ................. 103
5.1- Proportion (%) of Household Food Acquired from Different Sources ...... 125
5.2- Proportion of Household Food Budget Spent on Meals Away From Home .. 129
5.3- Frequency (%) of Visits to the Market .............................................. 131
5.4- Classification of Respondents’ Households on ‘Place’ of Food Purchase ... 138
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure:

1.1- Location of the 10 Largest Markets in Accra ................................. 7
2.1- Trend in Revenue from Ghana’s Major Export Items, 1990 – 2003 .......... 21
2.2- Composition of Ghana’s Non-Traditional Exports, 2000 – 2003 .......... 21
2.3- Ghana’s Food Import Bill, 1998 – 2002 ........................................... 23
2.4- Map of Greater Accra Region ......................................................... 37
2.5- Residential Classification of the Accra Metropolitan Area .................... 40
2.6- Classification and Location of Major Markets Recognised by the AMA ... 46
2.7- Map of Key Research Sites ............................................................. 47
3.1- Price Trends for Selected Grains, 2000 – 2004 ................................. 75
3.2- Price Trend for Selected Vegetables, 2000 – 2004 ............................. 75
4.1- Layout of Achimota Market ............................................................ 114
4.2- Layout of Madina Market ............................................................... 115
5.1- Proportion of Customers who Purchased Food from Other Markets ....... 133
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 The Issue

Achieving food security\(^2\) is a major challenge facing Third World\(^3\) cities. According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), a key challenge of this decade will be to provide adequate quantities of nutritional and affordable food for the urban inhabitants of the Third World (FAO, 1999). This concern still rings true as the decade draws to a close. Two problems underlie this crisis: a reduction in urban food supply and, due to limited purchasing power, decreasing entitlement\(^4\) to food (Riddell, 1997). This dire and difficult situation has arisen from the rapid urbanization of the population, mounting urban poverty, export-oriented agricultural production, the loss of productive agricultural land, and the rising costs of food (Asomani-Boateng, 2002; Drakakis-Smith, 1997).

The urban population of Third World countries is expected to grow by 60 million people a year over the next three decades (World Bank, 2003). A representative sample

\(^2\) Food security, as used here, refers to access to enough food by all people at all times to ensure an active and healthy life (Maxwell et al., 2000; Maxwell, 2001). Whereas food quality, safety, and nutritional value play a vital role in food security and are considered in the discussion, the emphasis in this study is on food availability, sufficiency, and sustainability.

\(^3\) The term Third World is used here to delineate the low-income countries of sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East. The continued use of the term has been a contentious issue, especially following the demise of the Soviet Union (the Second World) and the end of the Cold War. These events significantly eroded the geo-political significance and strategic importance of the countries designated as the Third World, and hence the justification for talking about a Third World is questioned. In the social sciences, there are concerns with the pejorative connotations and negative images associated with the use of the term (together with others like periphery, developing, underdeveloped, backward) and as such alternatives like the South are commonly employed (Berger, 1994; Black, 2002; Drakakis-Smith, 2000). I use this term in full recognition of its shortcomings and assumptions, as no satisfactory alternative presently exists.

\(^4\) Entitlement to food refers to how much a person can obtain through market purchase, producing or growing food, or food received via social exchange (see section 2.2).
of Third World cities indicates that the food needs of these cities will increase as the pace of urbanization accelerates over the next decade (depicted in Table 1.1). Also, the overall cost of supplying, distributing, and accessing food will rise as urban nutritional needs increase in complexity and diversity, and as cities depend on food transported from distant areas, especially imported food (Argenti, 2000; Hubbard and Onumah, 2001). These concerns raise critical questions about the capability of urban food systems in the Third World to meet the challenge of proving adequate supplies of food at affordable prices to all urban residents, especially the poor, as the pace of urban growth accelerates.

Table 1.1- Projected Level of Food Consumption in Selected Third World Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yaoundé, Cameroon</td>
<td>3,030</td>
<td>5,752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairobi, Kenya</td>
<td>4,805</td>
<td>7,984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isfahan, Iran</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>20,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karachi, Pakistan</td>
<td>41,800</td>
<td>63,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lima, Peru</td>
<td>19,276</td>
<td>24,567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port-au-Prince, Haiti</td>
<td>2,934</td>
<td>4,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managua, Nicaragua</td>
<td>2,782</td>
<td>4,075</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Argenti, 2000

The urban food problem in the Third World, and the dearth of investigation on this topic, has led to an urgent call for research and policy to address the looming crisis. There is an urgent need to address issues of affordability, supply, and distribution on the availability of, and access to food in the city. As well, the importance of examining the impacts of increasing urbanization, urban poverty, economic liberalization, the changing role of the state in service provision, and globalization on the urban food system has grown (Drakakis-Smith, 1997; Smith, 1998; Onibokun, 1994; Pinstrip-Anderson, 2000).
This study addresses these concerns by providing a better understanding of the changing nature of urban food supply and distribution, and exploring strategies that are necessary in order to promote urban food security and sustainability. The specific objectives underlying the investigation are:

i. to understand the link between urban food security, urban poverty, and sustainable development;

ii. to understand the nature of urban food systems and how they have altered in response to the spatial and population growth of the city;

iii. to examine how differently positioned people (by income and location) meet their food needs, and are adjusting to the changing nature of food supply and distribution; and

iv. to identify policy changes that are required to promote urban food security and urban sustainability.

The study pursues these objectives by focussing on how different households utilize urban food markets to satisfy their food needs, employing the empirical experience of Accra, Ghana as a case study. It provides a detailed analysis of how the population of high- and low-income neighbourhoods in Accra can and do interact with food markets. The study also examines how this interaction is being altered due to transformations occurring within these markets, and broader structural changes within the city. These

---

5 The term household is difficult to define for Accra, since people living within the same residential unit or compound do not necessarily comprise a household. Traditionally, the household extends well beyond the boundaries of the housing unit under consideration. The classical concept of the household, with its emphasis on co-residence, family bond, spatial enclosure, and common property applies only to a section of Accra’s residential neighbourhoods, particularly the high- and middle-income areas (Hanson, 2000; Maxwell et al, 2000). Among the indigenous Ga population and in the low-income migrant areas, housing units typically comprise multiple ‘households’- either as individuals or as groups. These individuals or groups are bound together by kinship, cultural, ethnic, or tribal ties, mostly through informal social networks (Acquah, 1958; Sanjek, 1982). The definition adopted for this study is based on co-residence and consumption from a common ‘pool’ of resources. Where necessary, a distinction is made between individual- and group- based households, and also between family- and socially-based households.
considerations paint a general picture of the kinds of relationships that exist between the rapid urbanization of the Third World and access to basic needs in urban areas.

1.1 Situating the Research Questions

As the nexus between food producers and consumers, food marketing is clearly one of the most critical linkages in the urban food system (Baulch, 2001; Frohlich, 1982; Hodder and Ukwu, 1969). Urban food markets have traditionally been the dominant source of unprocessed, semi-processed, and processed food (both local staples and imported food) in West African cities. In Accra, food purchases account for about 90 per cent of household food consumption (Maxwell et al., 2000). A series of studies initiated by the FAO emphasize this important role of food markets in urban food supply and distribution, and addresses some key challenges of these markets. These include improving market efficiency (Tollens, 1997); the role of local authorities in maintaining markets (Hubbard and Onumah, 2001; de Lardemelle, 1996); and the legal, infrastructural, and economic constraints of markets in West Africa (Terpend and Kouyaté, 1997; Wilhelm, 1997). The emergence of informal food activities (such as vending and the provision of street foods) within the urban food economy and their increasing importance in urban food distribution has also received attention in the literature (Drakakis-Smith, 1997; Fass, 1995; Rogerson, 1983; Smith, 1997; Tinker, 1997).

An extensive review of the literature on urban food supply in west and southern Africa by Potter et. al (2007), however, reveals that the mechanics of market institutions in determining access to food and welfare, especially for the urban poor, has been
neglected in policy and research circles. Also, although the impacts of structural adjustment and market liberalization have received much commentary and analysis, they have seldom been discussed with a focus on food supply and access in the city. The research on urban food systems remains patchy and fragmented. As Smith (1998) notes, urban food systems are considerably under-emphasized in the voluminous literature on urbanization in the Third World, particularly in the context of the needs of the urban poor. Key questions on how structural changes within the contemporary Third World city are altering the internal dynamics of urban food markets, and how urban households respond to these changes, with respect to their food acquisition and consumption patterns are yet to be explored by researchers.

This study, therefore, helps to fill this void by focusing on the interaction between households and urban food markets in a rapidly changing city. It examines changes that are occurring within the markets and the factors that influence household decisions on which market to utilize (where), at what time (when), and for which kinds of foodstuffs (what). This focus provides insights into the challenges and constraints that urban households face in purchasing sufficient food from the market, the kinds of coping strategies that households resort to when they are unable to purchase food from the market, and the capability of urban food markets to keep pace with the increasing, complex, and diverse food needs of expanding urban areas. The study is structured around the realities of life in the contemporary Third World city, and highlights how these realities represent first, how people responds to, and contribute to the urban transform in the Third World.
The Greater Accra Metropolitan Area (GAMA) of Ghana offers a compelling case for such an investigation. This region contains the national capital and is the largest and fastest growing urban agglomeration in the country. Indeed, Accra is one of the fastest growing cities in Africa, its population increasing annually at 4% for the period 1984 to 2000 (GSS, 2002). The city had a population of about 1.7 million in 2000 and is predicted to have 4 million inhabitants by 2020 (Grant and Yankson, 2003; GSS, 2002; UNCHS, 1999). Like most Third World cities, economic liberalization under structural adjustment has dramatically altered Accra’s demographic, economic, and socio-cultural composition, its institutional framework, and its physical form and appearance. Household poverty increased from 9% to 23% between 1988 and 1992, and results from the latest population census suggest a further increase in poverty over the 1990s (GSS, 2002).

GAMA contains about forty-three wholesale and retail markets, with twenty-one of these located in the Accra metropolis. In an earlier study, de Lardemelle, (1996) estimated that ten of these markets account for almost 80% of the city’s trade in local foodstuff. Recent estimates from the Accra Metropolitan Authority indicate that these markets remain the dominant source of local foodstuff in the city. This means that the emergence of new markets has not dramatically altered the hierarchy and role of those central markets in the city’s food supply system. It also underscores the importance of assessing how the newly developing markets in the city are impacting its food supply and distribution, and improving access to food by various households in the city. Figure 1.1 shows the location of the major markets in Accra.

6 See section 2.3.1 for GAMA and Accra boundaries.
Accra’s socio-economic conditions, coupled with the paucity of information on the capability of its food markets to meet the food requirements of its population, render this study to be of conceptual and practical importance. The most comprehensive food-based study in Accra to date was conducted by Maxwell et al. in 2000. They examined the nature of urban livelihoods, poverty, and food and nutrition security in the metropolis. Their study shed much light on the nature of urban poverty, vulnerability to food and nutrition insecurity, and improving access to nutrition. However, food security is a function of the availability of food as well as the ability to purchase food. Thus, it is essential to critically assess the capability of markets to provide adequate supplies of food for the growing urban population. The investigation builds on this study and augments
the limited knowledge on Accra’s food system by providing an up-to-date analysis of how households in Accra access food from the marketplace and its practical and theoretical significance to food distribution and access.

1.1.1 Inter-Linkages Between the Research Questions and Universal Issues

The research questions here investigated serve as the media with which to examine the broader issues relating to urban food supply and distribution. Urban food concerns are closely related to broader national and regional social, economic, political, and cultural spheres. This is because food not only has crucial ties to health, poverty, and general well-being, but also because it has important links to employment, the urban environment, and shelter (Drakakis-Smith, 1997). In light of such linkages, this study melds the concerns of urban food supply and distribution, sustainable urban development, and urban poverty reduction together in a conceptual analysis that sheds light on livelihood strategies and people’s access to food within a Third World urban environment. Table 1.2 summarizes the specific research objectives outlined in the introduction and ties them to the more universal issues for which answers will be pursued. Answering these questions provides the necessary information and a platform upon which to analyze the multifaceted nature of the food problem in a Third World city.

These questions and issues are explored through a comparative approach that examines the situation in various food markets and households in the city. The analyses provide a window which allows the examination of the macro questions relating to the city’s food marketing system. The focus on the actors within these markets and households also gives voice to different urban residents, especially the non-dominant,
silenced groups and this solicits the perspective from the micro level pertaining to how they conceptualize the problem, how they are dealing with the problem, and how they envision potential solutions to the problem.

### Table 1.2- Summary of Research Questions and Universal Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Objective</th>
<th>Research Questions/Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Understanding the link between urban food security, urban poverty, and sustainable development. |  ▪ How does food supply and distribution feature in the overall development goals and programs of city officials; their development paradigms, strategies, and programs?  
  ▪ What are the micro and macro forces responsible for the emerging trends in urban food systems?  
  ▪ What are the national and household budgetary constraints on the continuing import of expensive food?                                                                                                                                                                       |
| To examine how differently positioned people (by income and location) meet their food needs and are adjusting to the changing nature of food supply and distribution. |  ▪ How do structural factors such as the social and demographic features of households, gender dynamics, decision-making processes, activities, sources of income, and place of residence affect access to the marketplace and availability of food in a household? |
| To understand the nature of urban food systems and how they have altered in response to growth of the city. |  ▪ What are the formal and informal networks, actors, and institutions that maintain the marketplace?  
  ▪ How are the internal dynamics of the marketplace changing in the face of declining food production, increasing urbanization, liberalization, global integration, and changing consumption patterns? |
| To identify policy changes that are required to promote food security and urban sustainability. |  ▪ Can the market system of the future meet the challenge of providing increasing quantities of food for the rapidly growing urban area and its population? If not, how can the system be improved? |
1.1.2 The Marketplace and its Access

It is important to distinguish between the institution of the “market place” and the principle of “market exchange”. The market place is a site where a group of people meet purposely to buy and sell. The market principle on the other hand, is the interplay of the forces of demand and supply in the determination of prices (Bohannan and Dalton, 1980). The focus of this investigation is a concern with the market place in its geographical or place sense: that is, as a fixed site or location as well as its socio-cultural aspects (Epstein, 1982).

Put simply, a market as employed in this study is a place or a location where sellers and buyers meet. In a daily city market one encounters a variety of people- young and old, men and women, rich and poor, city dwellers and villagers, itinerant traders from neighbouring countries, and tourists. These groups of people approach the market with quite different ideas and needs. Social exchange takes place in the course of buying and selling in the marketplace. New acquaintances are formed. Friendships are renewed. Information circulates among some of the participants about prices and the availability of goods. These interactions take place through well-defined power structures and informal networks. The study will thus focus on how such marketplaces operate and how the relationships that maintain them are being revised in response to both internal and external forces.

Food markets exist to provide a variety of foodstuffs to consumers. However, the ability of consumers to access the marketplace may be constrained by barriers such as infrastructure, location, transportation costs, seasonality, availability, income, and costs. High food costs and low incomes can also decrease people’s entitlements to food through
market purchase (Riddell, 1997). These factors combine to influence who has access to the markets, what kinds of food are available for consumers, and what people can afford to buy. This study explores the factors that determine access to food markets and the foodstuff they provide.

1.2 **Scope and Significance of the Study**

Urban food supply and distribution encompass a broad spectrum of activities, ranging from food production, processing and procurement, providing services and infrastructure such as transportation, waste disposal and storage facilities, regulating the activities of food traders and operators of services, and enforcing food quality standards. The specific supply and distribution concern of this study is how much food is available at the marketplace, and how this food gets into the household. In this sense, the study pays particular attention to activities and interactions that occur within the household and the marketplace, and how these factors influence how much food is available for consumption.

This study is crucial for two reasons. First, it provides insights into how urban households are coping with the problems of securing sufficient quantities of food in the face of changing geo-political and socio-economic conditions. Second, it speaks to the issue of how food markets that have traditionally been relied upon to satisfy the food needs of a limited number of urban residents, are now meeting the challenge of maintaining adequate supplies of food for the burgeoning city and its increasing population.
While this study is pursued within a specific local and regional context, it provides systemic insights into wider issues affecting Third World cities in general. This is because there are many common global political and economic forces (processes, actors, and institutions) at work in shaping Third World countries and their cities. Consequently, most urban areas in the Third World, despite their unique attributes, share similar political, socio-economic, and environmental attributes (mounting debt and budget deficits, increasing poverty and declining standard of living, and environmental degradation) (Davis, 2006). Indeed, as Pryke (1999: 229) explains, “the ‘liberalisation of the global economy’ has become the dominant force shaping urbanisation in developing countries. City governments have no choice but to operate along the lines laid down by the dominant rhythm of neo liberalism”. This assertion is most evident in the wave of privatization of services and the decentralization of government functions across Third World cities.

It is recognized, however, that these “generic” forces are located and operate in specific historical, geographical, and socio-cultural settings for each city. They thus play out differently in each context, providing local variations to what may seem like a familiar problem (increasing unemployment, poverty, cost of living, inequality, crime, and informal economic activities on one hand, and decreasing access to health, education, food, and other vital social services for the majority of the population on the other). These common problems facing Third World cities are, therefore, viewed as the result of local, national, and global forces and processes (Drakakis-Smith, 2000), and this study examines the operation of broad, generic factors and local detail in a process of mutual information. In particular, it illustrates how the population of a Third World city, in this
case Accra, experiences and responds to these global forces given a set of local conditions.

1.3 Study Outline

The remainder of this thesis is organized into three sections. The first section, comprising chapter two, sets the theoretical and conceptual basis that informed this study. The chapter also describes the empirical design employed for the study.

The second section, consisting of chapters three, four, and five focuses on the results of the empirical investigation. Chapter three discusses patterns, trends, and emerging issues with food marketing in the city. This chapter highlights the weakening of the formal, legal, regulatory framework for food marketing in the city, the prominence of ad-hoc measures among food traders, and the constant struggle between city officials and traders over space. This chapter also highlights the importance of informal food enterprises as a source of food for many middle- to low- income residents in the city. In chapter four, the emphasis shifts to the voices of traders as they describe the changing nature of food marketing in the city. The chapter provides a detailed account of the challenges faced by market traders and the strategies they adopt to remain in business. The narratives presented also indicate how in the absence of a grand plan, the actions of individual food traders operating under different circumstances provide food for the city’s households. Chapter five examines household dynamics and food acquisition and consumption patterns. This chapter highlights the food acquisition practices of different types of households in the city and describes how they interact with various food outlets
in the city. It also discusses what is happening to the central role of food markets in the provision of food to households in the city.

Chapters six and seven comprise the final part of the thesis. Chapter six is an analysis and discussion of, livelihoods and access to food in the city based on a collection of opinions, perspectives, and life stories of various city residents. This chapter ties the empirical surveys together and shows how this case study has acted as a ‘window’ into our understanding of the food issues in the Third World city. The concluding chapter notes the significance of this study in addressing some of the gaps in the literature. It reiterates some of the salient issues uncovered in this study, and outlines some vital areas of future research.
2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides the context for this study and describes the methodology employed for the empirical surveys. The study is grounded on three basic assumptions: that current processes of restructuring at multiple scales translates into people’s lived experiences and alters their access to the resources required to meet their basic needs; that in the Third World, these alterations play out most dramatically in urban spaces; and that the impact of these alterations is most profound on poor and vulnerable residents in the city. The study adopts a political economy perspective to examine the process of development and its outcomes in urban spaces. As a body of thought and analytical framework, political economy acknowledges that social change (and spatial outcomes) are shaped by an intricate web of interrelated economic, political, and social decision making processes. These processes operate in tandem, each influencing and being influenced by the others rather than operating independently of them (Peet and Thrift, 1989; Barnes, 1995; Lee and Wills, 1997). Recent discussions on political economy emphasize the importance of power, discourse, culture and institutions in the process of social change (Barnes, 1995).

It is within this broad political, economic, and social context that urban dynamics in the Third World can be properly understood and the issue of food provision be explored. Examining urban food systems within this framework aids in identifying the role of the major macro and micro forces which shape urban places and thus access to
basic needs and services in the Third World. The section that follows discusses the two domains of literature that established the research context. The section is followed by an explanation of the conceptual framework adopted for understanding access to food in a Third World urban context. The final section focuses on the methods employed to identify respondents and solicit their opinions and perspective based on their unique circumstances and life experiences.

2.1 Research Context

Urban food supply and distribution take place within an environment of diverse conditions, constraints, actors, and institutions. Thus, in order to understand the nature of food supply, distribution, and consumption patterns in Third World cities, consideration must first be given to the broader local, national, and global institutions, actors, and processes that shape the utilization and distribution of resources in these countries. Also, the nature of relationships between the various actors and institutions must be considered. In this regard, this study places urban food supply and distribution within the context of development policy, rapid urbanization of the population, the spatial expansion of cities, and the crisis of managing urban growth in the Third World.

The rationale for this strategy emanates from the recognition that food is the most basic human need, and is key to the sustenance of individuals and households that comprise the city (Drakakis-Smith, 1997). It therefore provides a good medium to explore what is happening to the provision of, and access to basic needs in a Third World city, especially for the urban poor. This strategy also recognizes the critical role of urban
food markets in providing sufficient quantities of food for urban residents, and their impacts on livelihoods and poverty in the city (Potter et al., 2007).

2.1.1 The Development Conundrum and the Third World Food Problem

“No aspect of development appears to be as straightforward as hunger”

(Escobar, 1995: p.102)

It is important to mention the practice and process of development in Third World countries because it is within this context that resources are mobilized, utilized, and distributed to meet basic human needs, including food. This process requires “new configurations in [mobilizing, utilizing, and distributing] resources of land, and human energy” (Black, 2002: 113). As Kabeer (1994: 69-70) points out, development “[has become] the broader [process] of social transformation unleashed by the attempts of diverse development agencies at local, national and international levels, both within the official domain and outside it, to achieve various, often conflicting, goals”. This process can adversely affect food availability in two ways. It can decrease food supply, and reduce individual entitlement to food as illustrated in the following examples.

Gusten (1968) succinctly captured the paradox between development and food production when he concluded that “the dynamics of development do not by themselves provide an incentive to substantial productivity increase in [the food] sector. In fact, many of the concomitants of development [have] a distinctly adverse effect on the food-producing sector” (p. 92). Food production for domestic consumption has to compete with the export-oriented commercial agricultural sector and other industrial activities over productive resources, particularly land, labour, and capital. Also, to have access to
adequate food, people should either have the land to produce it for themselves, or enough money to buy it from elsewhere (Black, 2002). However, the practice of development in the Third World often compromises people’s food needs by depriving them of land to produce food or the money to purchase it due to paucity of jobs and incomes.

Escobar (1995) writes that although per capita agricultural production grew in most countries, this increase has not led to increased food supply for most people in those countries. He further notes that countries that were self-sufficient in food and even exported to the developed countries at the end of World War II became net importers of food during “the development era” (p. 104). The implementation of structural adjustment policies (SAP’s) in the 1980s and increased economic globalization, which together led to increased production for export, trade liberalization, and the removal of import controls, has worsened this situation in recent decades. Within the agricultural sector, promoting cash crop cultivation for export, together with commercialized, large scale agriculture producing high-profit, luxury goods have relegated food production to the background.

This process, described by Bryceson (2000) as “depeasantization”- the systematic phasing out of a mode of production to make the countryside more congenial for intensive capital accumulation- is replicated in nearly all countries that have experimented with economic reform and trade liberalization policies of the “Washington Consensus”. It had undermined food production for local consumption and has contributed largely to the food deficit in the Third World. In addition, SAPs demands for greater export production absorb both land and labour, leading to a reduction in domestic
food supply. As a result, access to land for small farmers to produce food for themselves and their communities has become increasingly difficult (IFG, 2001).

In Ghana, current data on poverty levels indicate that food crop farmers are the poorest occupation group in the country, with the highest incidence of poverty. Although the incidence of poverty has been reduced for all the occupation groups, food crop farmers made the least gains, remaining almost 18 per cent above the national average. In contrast, export crop farmers enjoyed the greatest gains in poverty reduction (Government of Ghana, 2000; IMF, 2003). The following table depicts the incidence of poverty within these agricultural sectors, self-employed non-farm workers, and at the national level.

### Table 2.1- Incidence of Poverty in Ghana (per cent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1991/92</th>
<th>1998/99</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>-15.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Employed Export Agric.</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>-37.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Employed Crop Agric.</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>-8.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Employed Non Agric.</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>-18.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Government of Ghana, 2000

The contribution of food crop farmers to the national incidence of poverty is much in excess of their share of the national population. Also, poverty based on the measure of extreme poverty is much more pronounced among food crop farmers⁷. The relative success in poverty reduction among export crop farmers reflects the conscious policy effort made by the government to promote non-traditional exports in the 1990s.

---

⁷ The upper poverty line is 900,000 cedis (US$363) and extreme poverty is 700,000 cedis (US$283) per annum (Government of Ghana, 2000; IMF/WB, 2001).
The aim of this policy is to diversify the country’s export base in order to increase foreign exchange earnings. As such, farmers engaged in food production for export had relatively easier access to financing and markets (IMF, 2003). On the contrary, farmers who produced solely for the domestic market faced severe constraints due to the removal of subsidies and price controls, and competition with other sectors of the economy, especially tourism.

The pursuit of export-oriented and hard-currency-earning agricultural policies has increasingly dictated crop choices, credit programs and incentives, and technical assistance to farmers. Where high-quality food is produced, larger quantities of a wider range of products are diverted to export markets for longer periods of the year. As a result, surpluses sold domestically may become smaller and less diverse. The government’s development blueprint, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, clearly identifies non-traditional export development as a priority area for poverty reduction. The government plans to increase non-traditional exports by reducing transaction costs and increasing the productive capacity of exporters (IMF, 2003). There is, however, no provision for farmers who produce solely for the local market.

Figure 2.1 shows the performance of the non-traditional export sector relative to the country’s traditional export commodities (cocoa, timber, and gold). As this figure (2.1) indicates, the value of non-traditional exports, measured in terms of revenue generation, rose steadily in the 1990s and has outpaced the country’s timber exports (as well as export of diamond, bauxite and manganese). Figure 2.2 shows the composition of non-traditional export from 2000 to 2003. It is important to note that the proportion of agricultural products as a component of non-traditional exports has also seen sustained
growth, relative to the other two components. While these trends are regarded as positive developments for the county’s export base and macro economic outlook, they do not auger well for food production for domestic consumption.

**Figure 2.1- Trend in Revenue from Ghana’s Major Export Items, 1990 – 2003**

![Graph showing trend in revenue from Ghana’s major export items, 1990-2003.](image)

Source: Ghana Ministry of Trade and Industry

**Figure 2.2- Composition of Ghana’s Non-Traditional Exports, 2000 – 2003**

![Bar chart showing composition of Ghana’s non-traditional exports, 2000-2003.](image)

Source: Ghana Export Promotion Council
Third World cities have become increasingly dependent on food produced outside their countries and for which conditions for local production are poor or virtually non-existent (Andrae and Beckman, 1985; Escobar, 1995). An example of this scenario is the case of importing wheat to produce bread, which has become a ‘local staple’ in many African cities (Andrae and Beckman, 1985). Imported food has become more popular than locally produced food, and the cost of importing these foods has escalated rapidly, adding to the debt burden of Third World countries (Drakakis-Smith, 1997). It is worthy of note, however, that the prices of imported foods are in some cases lower than those of locally produced food at the market place. This situation has led to an increasing struggle between domestic producers and importers to capture the food market. In Ghana, food ranks third (following petroleum and consumer goods) on the country’s import list. It is therefore ironic that while the country produces food for export, it continues to rely on imported food.

Using data from Nigeria, Andrea and Beckman (1985) argue that real wages of urban workers have become dependent on access to imported food. They add, however, that, “the long term interest of the [urban poor] is bound up with the ability of the nation to cut its dependence on large-scale importation of food, despite their immediate concerns with cheap imports as a cushion against falling real wages” (p. 5). Food imports absorb a significant proportion of export earnings. The continued importation of food cannot be sustained due to the lack of sufficient foreign exchange, especially when export earnings depend on one major or a few primary commodities which face declining prices (Andrae and Beckman, 1985; Obosu-Mensah, 1999). In the long run, therefore, imported food is not likely to adequately meet urban food needs, especially those of the
urban poor. It is rather more likely to add to the mounting foreign debt of the Third World. Data obtained from Ghana’s Ministry of Trade and Industry indicate that the volume of food imported into the country declined from about 3.9 million kilograms in 1998 to about 1.1 million kilograms in 2002. The cost of food imports, however, increased from about US$239 million to US$314 million (Figure 2.3). While the most recent data were not obtained during the field research, the available data clearly show that the cost of imported food, most of which can be locally produced, will only add to the country’s debt burden.

**Figure 2.3- Ghana’s Food Import Bill, 1998 – 2002**

![Graph showing Ghana’s Food Import Bill, 1998 – 2002](chart)

Source: Ghana Ministry of Trade and Industry

The incorporation of Third World countries into the global economic system is also worth mentioning. The pace and intensity of this incorporation have been enhanced through SAPs advocated by the international financial institutions (IFIs) (Riddell, 2003a). Current trends towards increasing global integration, including trade liberalization and
export promotion, the opening up of economies in the Third World, and the redefined role of the state, have a direct effect on access to basic needs and services, especially for the poor. Globalization plays out in many different ways in Third World cities, including changes in consumption patterns, behaviour, and adoption of “western” lifestyles.

With respect to urban food systems, the economic, social, and cultural aspects of globalization have implications for food production, costs, and safety (Pinstrip-Anderson, 2000). In many Third World cities, there is a trend towards “westernizing” food systems, especially in food retailing and marketing. There is also a change in consumer taste from local diets to imported food as consumer preferences are shaped by globally promoted images. This trend is typified by the proliferation of western-style fast-food outlets and retail outlets, together with the cultural transformation of urban populations towards western diets and foods (Drakakis-Smith, 1997). These changes in diet may pose new risks to people’s health and nutritional status. Also of interest is the link between a more integrated global system and the reappearance of food riots in the Third World over the last two decades. Walton and Seddon (1994: 23) posit that, “modern food riots occur in response to a new and ever more integrated global system”, noting in particular that these riots are rooted in economic liberalization and the soaring prices of foodstuffs.

Although the problems associated with increasing globalization have gained considerable attention in the literature, they have seldom been discussed in relation to urban food systems and food security. Given that the processes of globalization are likely to continue or even accelerate, it is imperative to critically examine how it affects food systems and people’s access to food and design appropriate policies that will reduce
poverty and improve food security, especially for low income people in Third World cities.

2.1.2 Transformation of the Urban Landscape and its Impact of Food Systems

The scale, nature, and trends of urbanization, as well as the problems posed by the rapid urbanization process in Third World countries have received much attention in the literature (Davis, 2006; Drakakis-Smith, 1997; Gilbert and Gugler, 1992; Gugler, 1997; Mabogunje, 1968; 1989; 1990; 1994; Post, 1997; Stren, 1994; 1995; Stren and Halfani, 2001; Satterthwaite, 2002; Yankson, 1997). The rapid rates of the urbanization of the population, the physical expansion of urban areas, and the magnitude of resultant changes are rapidly transforming the economic, social, and economic dynamics of towns and cities in the Third World.

While urbanization in the developed countries proceeded in tandem with socio-economic transformation marked by job creation, improved infrastructure, expanding services, greater housing supply, and transportation, urbanization in the Third World has recently taken on a quite different character. Urban populations here are increasing without a proportionate expansion of infrastructural development and service provision (Konadu-Agyemang, 1998; 2001; Qadeer, 2004; Rakodi, 1997; 2002), with huge populations living in poverty with very limited access to clean water, sanitation, adequate housing, and employment. There are also critical problems relating to governance, solid waste management (Demanya, 2001), air pollution, and cities expanding into fragile ecosystems (WRI, 1996). Table 2.2 compares trends in urban development in selected high- and low-income countries.
Table 2.2- Comparing Urbanization Trends in Selected High- and Low-Income Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Ghana</th>
<th>Haiti</th>
<th>Indonesia</th>
<th>Pakistan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban Population (millions)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>167.6</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>221.0</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>100.2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>87.7</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total Population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% change</td>
<td><strong>4.05</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td><strong>3.95</strong></td>
<td><strong>16.13</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td><strong>90.91</strong></td>
<td><strong>17.86</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Population in Urban regions of more than 1 million</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% change (2000-2015)</td>
<td><strong>-2.63</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.26</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.63</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>27.27</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>19.04</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The pace and direction of urbanization in the last two decades have been shaped by both internal and external forces, operating from the global to the local scale, and producing complex and diverse results in cities rather than by urban planning regimes. Urban planning in Third World cities is constrained by crisis management, budgetary constraints following decentralization (Ayee, 1994; 1996; 2003), and the deregulation and privatization of services associated with structural adjustment (Demanya, 2001). As O’Connor (1983: 237) observes, “the physical form or spatial structure of each city is … influenced to a very large extent by the planning decisions of a few foreign firms and thousands of local individuals and families, rather than by officials of any town planning department” (cited in Myers, 1994: 196).
At the macro-level, the operation of global institutions and corporate bodies continue to transform the economies and socio-cultural relations in Third World cities. An example of this scenario is the investment decisions of multinational corporations, or the implementation of SAPs and their effects on cities. On one hand, incomes of some urban dwellers are rising rapidly, leading to increasing demand for more expensive foods as well as for processed products. On the other, most urban dwellers in developing countries remain highly disadvantaged, having only very limited purchasing power and entitlements to food (see Briggs and Yeboah, 2001; Riddell, 1992; 1997; Zack-Williams, 2000).

This pattern of urbanization has undermined the ability of urban food systems to adequately cater for the food needs of the growing urban population. This is because urbanization potentially reduces urban food supply, and changes within the urban political economy can limit people’s access to food through market purchase. According to Drakakis-Smith (1990), urban food systems have three components: food-producing areas, marketing networks, and urban consumption centres. The process of urbanization quantitatively and qualitatively affects all these components of the food system. For example, the marketing network’s response to urbanization (growth and changes in food demand) affects the relative mix of food acquisition methods (exchange, production, transfer) among different groups of urban residents, as well as the system’s use of supply areas.

In Accra, Kufogbe (1996) has noted that urban “sprawl in the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area is having a considerable impact on contiguous peri-urban areas, resulting in the conversion of agricultural lands to residential uses” (cited in Asomani-
Private investment in housing development has risen primarily due to the favourable conditions granted by SAPs on one hand, an increase in the expatriate community, an expanding middle class, and demand for housing for housing by Ghanaians living abroad. These reasons have led to a rapid expansion of residential units in the outskirts of the city (Briggs and Yeboah, 2001). As well, there is competition between demands for land needed for housing, industry, and infrastructure, and land required for food production within and around cities.

The growth of the informal sector is one of the most visible changes to the urban landscape. The prominence of this sector in itself represents how urban residents are both active participants and victims of the transformation of the urban landscape. The suite of economic activities labelled as ‘informal’ continues to provide livelihoods and incomes to a large section of the urban population due to the process of restructuring in cities. The food trade, which was once confined to the marketplace, is now carried out in every corner of the city, and the expansion of the food trade within the city, especially ready-to-eat meals, has in many ways contributed to the availability of food in the city.

One strategy that is increasingly gaining attention as a way of meeting urban food needs is urban agriculture. Once considered an oxymoron and incompatible with urban land use, the importance of urban farming in providing food, jobs, and income has gained significance from local and international agencies as well as in academia, and research on this issue has grown recently (see Castillo, 2003; Djabatey, 1998; Egziabher et. al., 1994; Ellis and Sumberg, 1998; Freeman, 1991; Lynch, 2002; Porter et. al., 2007). However, the literature on urban farming in Africa reveals that studies have been concentrated in eastern and southern Africa (see Asomani-Boateng, 2002; Obosu-Mensah, 1999).
Studies and reports on urban agriculture in Africa emphasize the economic value of this activity, and the need to effectively incorporate urban agriculture into city planning, and encouraging it through improved access to land. Also accompanying this is an urgent call to protect adjacent rural agricultural land from urban sprawl. Box 1 summarizes some of the main findings from the urban agriculture research in African cities.

**Box 1: Issues in Urban Agriculture**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Important strategy to food procurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Source of employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Survival strategy for low income urban households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Makes use of urban wastes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Competition over water supply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Health concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Competing urban land issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ May benefit only rich urban residents in some cases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adopted from Lynch, 2002; p.270

In Accra, however, available research reveals that urban agriculture does not contribute significantly to household food security. Maxwell et al.’s study (2000) indicates that urban agriculture does not play a large role in household livelihood strategies as it does in other African cities such as Nairobi, Kenya (Freeman, 1991). They state that only 1 per cent of household food consumption is home produced, and less than 15 per cent of households in the city engage in any kind of agricultural production. Amar-Klemetsu and Maxwell (1998) note that there is little evidence to suggest that urban agriculture has a positive impact on food and nutritional security in Accra. Urban agriculture, however, remains of critical importance in the peri-urban areas.
surrounding the city, and its viability as a source of food and income is threatened by the physical expansion of the city (Asomani-Boateng, 2002; Maxwell et al, 2000). Studies among households that engage in urban agriculture in Accra indicate that this practice contributes significantly to household food supply and nutritional supplement, reduces the household food budget and generates income and employment (Djabatey, 1998).

Another significant observation from the literature on Accra is that male farmers dominate urban cultivation in Accra (about 80% of them being migrants), whereas females dominate this activity in other African cities, particularly in central and eastern Africa (Amar-Klemetsu and Maxwell, 1998; Asomani-Boateng, 2002; CENSOSAD, 1994). Also, urban cultivation is responsible for a substantial proportion of the city’s supply of fresh vegetables. These studies indicate that it is mainly the middle- and higher- income classes that consume these vegetables and benefit nutritionally, whereas the low-income migrant farmers benefit in terms of income.

2.2 Theoretical Framework: Entitlement and Vulnerability

For many poor people, the primary concern is the lack of adequate financial resources to access their daily needs, rather than being a matter of the availability of those needs. The discussion on food has, however, tended to focus more on how much food is available rather than on broader issues such as who has access to food, how food is distributed, and the implications of the continued reliance on imported food on national budgets and the Third World debt crisis, local farming systems, food costs, dietary

---

8 The CENCOSAD study estimates that as much as 90% of vegetables consumed in the city is produced by urban farmers. This figure is yet to be corroborated by other studies.
patterns and health, hunger, and poverty (Devereux, 1993; Drakakis-Smith, 1997; Dreze and Sen, 1989).

Sen’s (1981) ‘entitlement approach’ is key to understanding issues of inadequate supplies of food and hunger within Third World cities. Sen’s work rejects the Malthusian model with its emphasis on the catastrophic outcomes of overpopulation and environmental destruction. According to Sen, hunger and starvation ought to be viewed in terms of the collapse of the entitlements of particular demographic or occupation groups, rather than purely in terms of deficient food output. Sen defines entitlement as “the set of alternative commodity bundles that the person can command” (1981: 46) and explains that it refers to what a person can obtain, rather than what the person needs to avoid starvation.

This approach emphasizes the differences that exist in people’s ability to acquire food, or their exchange entitlement- the alternative bundles of commodities (in this case, food) that one can acquire in exchange for what one owns. Exchange entitlement is based on four types of ownership: production, trade, labor, and inheritance or transfer. Through a combination of these means, individuals gain access to food directly or to the ability to acquire it indirectly through market purchase. Sen (1983) further contends that poverty is essentially a matter of entitlement and capabilities: “… the most important deficiency of traditional development economics is its concentration on national product, aggregate income and total supply of particular goods rather than on ‘entitlements’ of the people and the ‘capabilities’ these entitlements generate” (p. 754). People often suffer from inadequate supplies of food and malnutrition, mostly due to lack of purchasing power and high food prices.
Dréze and Sen (1989) assert that although “food production is one of the most important determinants of entitlements” (p. 25), it is, by itself inadequate for an understanding of famines, starvation, and hunger. Sen’s approach suggests that personal and household food insecurity be analyzed in terms of those factors that make entitlements of a section of the population fall short of their minimum food requirements. These factors include variables such as ownership patterns, unemployment, relative prices, and wage-price ratios (Sen, 1993). Hence, food security for the urban poor ought to be seen as a livelihoods issue.

Food security for the urban poor is closely related to their purchasing power, or their ability to earn an adequate income for themselves and their families. The World Bank (2003) asserts that while global food availability has increased, wide variations exist among countries and regions. The Bank points to insufficient purchasing power in the hands of poor people as the source of inadequate food, and not global constraints on aggregate food production. According to the Bank, although food prices have fallen to record lows, many poor people still do not have the purchasing power to buy enough food. As a result, throughout the Third World 820 million people do not receive sufficient food to lead healthy and productive lives. Entitlement to food through market purchase is, therefore, a crucial issue in this study since, in Accra, market purchase accounts for about 90 per cent of food consumption. Gifts account for six per cent of household food consumption. One per cent is given to worker in lieu of wages, and another one per cent is home produced (Maxwell et al., 2000).

Closely related to the concept of entitlement is that of vulnerability. The concept of vulnerability refers to “the insecurity of the well-being of individuals, households or
communities in the face of a changing [ ecological, economic, social, or political] environment” (Moser, 1996: 2). According to Moser, these changes in environment often result in increased risk and uncertainty. Vulnerability can also be explained as a combination of exposure to risk, and of the ability of households and individuals to cope with, or recover from a ‘shock’ or deterioration of current status (Maxwell et al., 2000; Watts and Bohle, 1993). Vulnerability can therefore be in terms of those conditions, situations, or events that predispose people to unfavourable outcomes.

According to Lovendal and Knowles (2007), vulnerability to food insecurity refers to people’s propensity to fall or stay below a certain food security threshold within a certain timeframe. People are vulnerable to hunger when they “risk ongoing lack of access to the food they require in order to live healthy lives” (Watts and Bohle, 1993: 45). The concept of vulnerability is important in analyzing access to food in the city because any attempts to reduce hunger require a sound understanding of which people lack this access and why (DeRose and Millman, 1998). Unfortunately, frameworks for integrating longer-term vulnerability in food security analysis are largely absent, and most existing analysis, often applied in the context of early warning systems, focus on transitory risks (Lovendal and Knowles, 2007)

Entitlement and vulnerability are crucial in understanding food insecurity at the individual and household levels. These two concepts provide the framework to analyzing the extent to which urban households interact with the city’s market institutions to adequately meet their food needs. This framework shifts the emphasis from environmental and demographic causes and pays particular attention to the economic and socio-political causes of inadequate supplies of food in the urban household. This kind of
analysis also involves identifying the causes and manifestations of vulnerability to insufficient food in a household (Baro and Deubel, 2006; Lovendal and Knowles 2007). Household vulnerability and entitlement are thus directly linked to access to food and food availability in a household. This is because vulnerability is determined by a cumulative chain of events and circumstances, and these subsequently provide entitlement to food, be it through own production or market acquisition.

2.3 **Research Approach and Strategy**

Aragrande (1997) has noted that different disciplines approach analysis of food supply and distribution systems with different conceptual and methodological tools. According to him, geographers’ approach to food supply and distribution is based on the idea of “space”; seeking to interpret the way it is organized and differentiated in terms of the functions that occur in it:

“In geography, the concept of space assumes scientific and analytical significance when it is differentiated and takes the form of a complex of structures, forms, functions and relationships anchored in physical space. The particular sphere of interest for geographers is the process of differentiation and its results. Thus they study relationships between urban space and the supply of food to urban inhabitants” (p. 3).

From the geographical perspective, the question of feeding cities is closely linked with the phenomenon of urban growth, which is often the source of supply and distribution problems. The investigation is therefore concerned with the linkages that exist between the process of urban growth and the organization of the market as a place- with its complex structures; (hierarchies, functions, levels of power); processes; actors; and the inter-relationships between the structures and actors within and between markets. Analyzing
food markets from a geographic perspective elucidates how they work and deepens our understanding of how they respond to urbanization, changes in the amount of food required, and consumers’ preference for various foods (Onumah and Hubbard, 1999). Since these markets exist to serve the needs of the city’s residents, it is imperative to examine how the resulting changes to the unique character of the market place are reflected in changes to how much food is available in a household. In this sense, the urban household becomes a key place of interest in further examining this relationship.

Exploring the role of urban food markets and their capability to cope with rapid urbanization and increasing food needs of urban households also requires an examination of the broad-scale political and economic structures, institutions, and the policy environment in the localities within which markets operate. Through the decentralization process in Ghana, the District Assemblies have become the interface between the Central Government and the localities, and are vested with legislative and administrative authority in almost all spheres of government at the local level (Ayee, 1994; 1996; Demanya, 2001). District assemblies are responsible for providing the appropriate infrastructure and services needed to ensure that both traders’ and customers’ needs are met (de Lardemelle, 1997). Their decisions and policies can therefore either enhance or constrain the role that markets play in household food supply and distribution.

This observation, coupled with the place-specific nature of the research outlined earlier, provides three entry points into the empirical investigation:

- The spatial context within which the issue under investigation is located;
- the administrative, bureaucratic, and organizational units that mediate between the development of macro policy and local settings; and
- the direct observation of internal dynamics in a local setting (Skinner, 2003).
These research questions are explored through a case study approach. Case studies entail an investigation of the actors, institutions, structures, and processes that pertain to the area under investigation (Bradshaw and Stratford, 2000; Yin, 1994). They also facilitate the examination of causal relationships by focusing both spatially and temporally on the processes which underlie a series of events and conditions, thereby demonstrating how these can lead to specific outcomes (Milligan, 2001). Case studies, therefore, provide useful insights into how a problem is conceptualized locally and how localities respond to the problem. This specificity not only identifies that a particular thing has happened, but explains how and why it happened (Huberman and Miles, 1994).

### 2.3.1 Spatial Setting

The empirical study was conducted in the Accra metropolis of the Greater Accra Region (GAR) in Ghana, West Africa. The GAR, which is the smallest of the ten administrative regions in Ghana, is the most urbanized region and major industrial centre of the country (Benneh et al., 1993). It is comprised of five lower levels of government, namely Gangme West District, Dangme East District, Ga District, Tema District, and the Accra Metropolitan Area (Figure 2.4).

There are two definitions of Accra currently in use. These are the Accra Metropolitan Area (AMA) or Accra District, and the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area (GAMA). The AMA is officially defined as the City of Accra, Ghana’s capital since 1877 and its major economic city. Accra was declared a city in 1961, with its municipal boundary encompassing an area of over 225 square kilometres. Following local

---

9 Since this study was conducted, the Ga District has been divided into Ga East and Ga West Districts, creating six lower levels of governments within the Greater Accra Region.
government reform, Accra became the Accra Metropolitan Area in April 1988, with the Accra Metropolitan Assembly being its political, planning, and management body (Songsore and Goldstein, 1995; Stephens, 1999).

**Figure 2.4- Map of Greater Accra Region**

![Map of Greater Accra Region](image)

Source: GSS, 2002

The AMA is the largest and fastest growing urban region in Ghana. Accra is indeed one of the fastest growing cities in Africa (UNCHS, 1999; cited in Grant and Yankson, 2003). Between 1984 and 2000, the Accra metropolis grew at an annual rate of 4%, increasing in population from 965,195 to 1,658,937 (GSS, 2002). The city is predicted to have 4 million inhabitants by 2020 (Grant and Yankson, 2003). Apart from the increasing population size, the city’s boundaries have also rapidly expanded,
especially since the mid 1960s. It therefore reflects the situation of most urbanizing regions in the Third World.

The Greater Accra Metropolitan Area is the larger metropolis comprised of three urban districts, namely Accra (AMA), Ga District, and Tema District. Much of the growth and expansion of Accra that occurred after the 1960s did so outside of the city boundaries. This development resulted in the creation of further urbanized areas beyond the jurisdiction of the city. With time, these areas have become functionally integrated in both the economic and physical spheres. Thus the urbanized metropolitan region has the AMA as the core, the Tema District, which has developed as an industrial satellite, and the Ga District, which has received most of the uncontrolled urban development and sprawl beyond the congested core of the AMA. GAMA is often used to define the effective boundary of Accra, and officials analyze the AMA as a part of GAMA. The AMA contains about 57% of the total population of GAMA and remains the hub of economic activity in the region (GSS, 2002; Stephens, 1999; Songsore and McGranahan, 1993).

Although the study concentrates on markets and households in the AMA, the analysis invariably extends into GAMA. This is because of the nature of social, political, and economic linkages between AMA and GAMA. No proper analysis of AMA can occur without considering the broader regional context within which AMA exists. The residential areas of the AMA have been classified according to average household income, population and housing density, demographic characteristics, the degree of urban
incorporation, and ethnicity (Benneh et al, 1993; Songsore and McGranahan, 1993; Songsore and Goldstein, 1995) (Figure 2.5)\(^{10}\). These are:

- High Density Indigenous\(^{11}\) Sector (HDIS)
- High Density Low-Class Sector (HDLCS)
- Medium Density Indigenous Sector (MDIS)
- Medium Density Middle-Class Sector (MDMCS)
- Low Density Middle-Class Sector (LDMCS)
- Low Density High-Class Sector (LDHCS)
- Low Density Newly Developing Sector (LDNDS)
- Rural Fringe (RF)

\(^{10}\) The AMA has classified residential areas in Accra into four classes to calculate rates and levies for its residents (Government of Ghana, 2004). The criteria for this classification scheme are, however, not defined, and there some areas have been placed in more than one class (see Appendix I). Also some of the newly developing areas, especially in the fringe, are not included in this scheme.

\(^{11}\) The term indigenous is used to identify predominantly Ga enclaves, the Ga being the original settlers of Accra (Songsore and McGranahan, 1993).
Figure 2.5- Residential Classification of the Accra Metropolitan Area
2.3.2 Research Methodology

The methodology adopted for the empirical research was guided by the need to first, collect perceptions, opinions, and life experiences (voices) from the actors on the ground and second, study the social, economic, and political context within which these voices resonate. The goal in designing the research methodology was to pursue a model that will allow the participants to discuss the issues at length, and also allow significant statistical relationships to be established where necessary. The study thus employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods in sourcing primary and secondary data that addressed the research objectives and questions.

As Berg (2001) points out, each of these methods offers a “different line of sight” directed towards the same point. By combining the “lines of sight” offered by each method, we “obtain a more substantive picture” of the phenomenon under investigation (p. 4-5). This mixed strategy is, therefore, the most appropriate method with which to explore the complex social, economic, political, and environmental dimensions of the problem. Table 2.3 summarizes and links the research objectives, questions, and methodology. According to Yin (1994), each research strategy has its pros and cons depending on the type of research questions, the control of the investigator over actual

---

12 Two main reasons are identified in the literature for combining qualitative and quantitative methods in a single study. The first is to achieve cross-validation or triangulation (combining two or more sources of data to study the same phenomena to gain a more complete understanding of it) and second, to achieve complementary results by using the strengths of one method to enhance the other. This practice has, however, been criticized for a number of reasons, the most notable being the differences in conceptual issues, (such the ontological and epistemological paradigm of each method) the nature of reality and truth, and the process of discovering what is reality or truth for each method (see Appendix II). Despite their differences, these two methods share a common goal of understanding the world in which we live, a commitment to understand and improve the human condition, and disseminating knowledge for practical use. Both methods share unified logic, the same rules of inference commitment for rigor, contentiousness, and critique in the research process (see Berg, 2001; Sale et al., 2002; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). My rational for adopting a mixed method strategy was to ensure that an appropriate breadth and depth of data were gathered, based on the empirical causal relationships and people’s lived experiences.
behavioural events, and the focus on contemporary as opposed to historical phenomena. The strategy employed in this study is derived directly from the objectives and questions driving the investigation.

The methodology employed therefore relied on multiple instruments to collect data from the field: participant observation, focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, and in-depth interviews with a variety of actors. This approach is driven by the belief that the research questions being investigated are just part of a complex mesh of living in the contemporary Third World city. While the design of these instruments was guided by the research objectives and questions, the multi-dimensional nature of the issue under investigation required that participants be allowed to interpret the issues from their own perspective, and in their own voice, in order to provide valuable insights into relationships that cannot be uncovered with pre-defined answers, which often reflect the researcher’s bias (see Herod, 1993; Parfitt, 1997; Patton, 1990).

The use of multiple methods in a single study also allows the researcher to gain a more holistic view of the issue, since different methods yield different, often complementary perspectives on the same issue (Morse, 1994). For example, the use of statistical techniques alone to explain home-based decision-making cannot adequately capture the sociological processes that underlie such decisions and their outcomes. In this case, data obtained by qualitative methods can provide insights to uncovering the processes that shape these patterns (see McDowell, 1992).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Research Objective</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Type of Data, Site, and Methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of Research Proposal and Literature Review</td>
<td>Understanding the link between urban food security, poverty reduction, and sustainable development.</td>
<td>How does food supply and distribution feature in the overall development goals and programs of city officials; their development paradigms, strategies, and programs?</td>
<td>Review of literature, local and national government policies and documents, project reports, and media reports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What are the micro and macro forces responsible for the emerging trends in urban food systems?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What are the national and household budgetary constraints on the continuing import of expensive food?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Field Research | To examine how differently positioned people (by income and location) meet their food needs and are adjusting to the changing nature of food supply and distribution. | How do structural factors such as the socio-demographic features of households, decision-making processes, activities, sources of income, and places of residence affect access to the marketplace and availability of food in a household? | Household surveys and interviews-  
- Inner city vs. suburb  
- Wealthy vs. poor neighborhoods  
Focus group discussions |
| | To understand the nature of urban food markets and how they have altered in response to growth of the city. | How are the internal dynamics of the marketplace changing in the face of declining food production, increasing urbanization, liberalization, global integration, and changing consumption patterns? | Interviews with key informants and stakeholders  
- City officials, consultants  
- Traders- wholesalers, retailers, food vendors, service providers, etc.  
- Market case studies |
| | | What are the formal and informal networks, actors, and institutions that maintain the marketplace? | |
| Data Analysis | To identify policy changes that are required to promote food security and urban sustainability. | Can the market system of the future meet the challenge of providing increasing quantities of food for the rapidly growing urban area and its population? If not, how can the system be improved? | Review of literature and reports, analysis of data from case studies, household surveys, and key informants. |
2.3.3 Site Selection and Data Collection

The field research was conducted in two phases consisting of three stages: Phase I from September to December, 2004; and Phase II from January to June, 2006. Phase I comprised of two stages: selecting research sites, and identifying stakeholders and key informants through informal discussions and conversations with key actors. Phase Two included a third stage, during which data was collected from participants. These stages conform to the three entry points identified earlier (section 2.3).

The first stage involved identifying sites for the empirical surveys. As outlined earlier, two key locales within the city of Accra present the spatial context for this study: urban households, and urban food markets. The challenge was therefore to select sites that represent the dynamic mix of neighbourhoods and different types of food markets in the city. This challenge was compounded by the absence of a proper sampling frame for the study area, especially for the households.

To circumvent this problem, the residential classification scheme for Accra’s neighbourhoods described in section 2.3.1 (figure 2.5) was used. Six neighbourhoods were randomly selected to represent the residential classes within the city. The initial list was further refined to emphasize geographic dispersion within and socio-economic status of households in the city. In this regard, particular emphasis was placed on “rich versus poor” neighbourhoods, and “inner-core versus outer suburb” for comparative analysis. This stage also included detailing the social, demographic, and economic characteristics of the selected neighbourhoods for analysis. In the case of the markets, the list of markets officially recognized by the AMA was obtained. The AMA recognizes thirty (30) markets in the city and its environs, and these markets have been classified as either
wholesale or retail markets. The location of these markets is shown in figure 2.6. The markets on the AMA list were re-classified as large-scale (wholesale), medium-scale (retail), and small-scale (neighbourhood level). This classification scheme was based on estimates provided for the volume of trade within the market, and the catchment area of its customer base. Three markets were randomly selected, one for each of the classes, for in-depth study. The in-depth studies involved detailing daily activities at these markets through personal observation and interacting with the various actors and stakeholders at the markets. The neighbourhoods and markets selected for the study are identified in the table 2.4 and located on figure 2.7.

Table 2.4- Key Research Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market Type</th>
<th>Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Wholesale/large-scale</td>
<td>Agbogbloshie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Medium/Retail</td>
<td>Madina(^{13})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Small/Neighborhood</td>
<td>Achimota</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood Type</th>
<th>Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• High Density Indigenous Sector</td>
<td>Nungua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High Density Low-Class Sector</td>
<td>Sukura/Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Medium Density Indigenous Sector</td>
<td>Bubuashie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Medium Density Middle-Class Sector/ Low Density Middle-Class Sector</td>
<td>Asylum Down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Low Density High-Class Sector</td>
<td>Cantonments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Low Density Newly Developing Sector</td>
<td>Baatsona</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{13}\) Although Madina Market is located outside the official boundary of the Accra Metropolitan Area, its location rendered it crucial to this study. It is one of the few markets located outside the city that caters to a large client base within the city. This market has also experienced extensive growth and development over the last decade and so it offered an excellent opportunity to explore how this growth has changed the market, and affected the food situation in the city.
Figure 2.6- Classification and Location of Major Markets Recognised by the AMA
Figure 2.7- Key Research Sites
The second stage of the research involved identifying key informants and participants for the interviews and focus group discussions, and building the necessary foundation to meaningfully engage these participants. Given the participatory nature of the field research, it was very important to reduce the gap between researcher and participants as much as possible. The initial task was to establish key contacts in the research sites, who would facilitate entry into the site and assist in building rapport, establishing trust, and create a congenial atmosphere in the communities and markets. This process was much easier in the markets than in the neighbourhoods, and the contribution of the market leaders to the field research cannot be overstated. Extensive discussions with the key contacts provide valuable information that helped to refine the research instruments and develop themes that later became the building blocks for the focus group discussions.

Participants for the study were selected purposively; that is, based on their expertise and relevance to the issue under investigation. This sampling methodology was preferred because it allowed participants to be selected from the network established within the sites, and the respondents’ own network. Because an official, systematic record of households could not be obtained for the household surveys[^14], each neighbourhood identified was divided into ‘quarters’, and residential units were selected to represent those quarters. The number of interviews per neighbourhood was split equally among the ‘quarters. This was to ensure that the surveys were not concentrated in specific areas of the neighbourhoods. The initial list of respondents comprised:

[^14]: This problem is attributed mainly to the unplanned nature in which the city has grown.
- residents of selected residential areas;
- officials from the public and private sectors whose activities touch on food supply and distribution, or who have expertise in this area;
- food retailers, traders, vendors, and service providers at the selected markets.

From this list, snowballing was conducted, in which case initial respondents in the markets were asked to recommend additional respondents based on their experience and expertise\(^\text{15}\).

The final stage of the field research involved collecting data from the various sites and sources identified in the first two stages. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation. A total of 507 interviews and three focus group discussions were held as follows:

- 27 in-depth interviews with officials and experts;
- 60 in-depth interviews with traders (20 in each market);
- 300 interviews with market customers (100 in each market);
- 120 household interviews (20 in each neighbourhood); and
- 3 focus group discussions (1 in each market)\(^\text{16}\).

In addition, I held random, informal conversations with a host of residents from all walks of life at various stages of the research on a wide range of issues related to livelihoods and access to food in the city. Although these discussions were not included in the research design, they provided rich ethnographic data on food acquisition and consumption patterns in the city, especially at the individual level.

---

\(^{15}\) Snowball sampling relies on referrals from initial subjects to generate additional subjects. This technique was used to augment the purpose sample frame. It is recognized that snowball sampling comes at the expense of introducing bias, because it reduces the likelihood that the sample will represent a good cross section from the population. This technique was used in full recognition of its limitation.

\(^{16}\) Although the original research design included a focus group discussion in each of the selected neighbourhoods, this was impossible to achieve. While the majority of people approached quickly consented to the interviews, there was not much interest expressed in the focus groups, and hence we could not solicit enough participants for the discussions. Most people simply cited time constraints and did not know how this will benefit them. The idea was eventually abandoned due to the lack of interest.
The first set of in-depth interviews was conducted with key informants and stakeholders in the government and non-government sector, who are directly or indirectly involved in the urban food sector, that is, those whose programs and activities touch on urban food security. This included personnel from:

- the District office of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture;
- the Ministry of Trade and Industry and Ghana Export Promotion Council
- the Accra Metropolitan Assembly;
- Ga East District Assembly;
- Town and Country Planning Department;
- Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research, Food Research Institute;
- Ghana Statistical Service, Market Statistics Section;
- Ngouchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research;
- Institute for Statistical, Social and Economic Research;
- private consultants, academics, researchers, and urban planners; and
- the FAO Regional Office in Accra.

These interviews were primarily geared towards the first research objective, and to lesser degree the third one. They were designed to solicit the respondents’ perspectives on issues pertaining to the city’s food situation, household food security, the role of food markets, key problems, institutional capacities, and the potential for better urban food distribution and security. The interviews were open ended to allow for a detailed discussion of the issues identified.

The market interviews were preceded with focus group discussions and participant observation in all three markets. Each focus group comprised not more than six people and was organized around three major themes (these are explored in detail in chapter 4). This approach allowed the participants to touch on all aspects of the food situation in the city from their perspective. It also allowed me to identify issues that needed to be probed further in the in-depth interviews. The household interviews were used to gather information on household and individual food needs, food sources,
These interviews provided information on household dynamics, economic and socio-demographic conditions, food supply, and consumption habits. The focus groups and follow-up interviews were geared towards the second and third research objectives. In addition to the primary data, secondary data was gathered from the media, government legislation, policies, and documents, as well as documents from local and international aid agencies and NGOs.

Valuable assistance and logistical support was provided by the Department of Geography and Resource Department, University of Ghana during the field research. I recruited three research assistants from the department to help with the field surveys. The research assistants conducted the interviews with households and market customers, while I conducted the focus groups and in-depth interviews with the market traders and officials and experts. Prior to the field research, we held a seminar on ethnographic research methods in preparation for the data collection exercise, and during the course of the exercise, we met daily to evaluate the day’s activities and address any issues that needed to be resolved before venturing out the next day. The daily meetings enabled me to be abreast with issues and themes that were developing and to monitor the progress of the data collection. The intelligence, vigour, and sensitivity that the team brought to the research were vital to the success of this study.

17 The interview guides and discussion questions are contained in the Appendix III.
18 The research assistants were recent graduates in Geography from the University of Ghana who were preparing for graduate studies. At the time of the study, they were all employed as teaching/research assistants in the department.
2.3.4 Ethical Concerns and Re-Presenting Actors’ Voices

In the process of conducting ethnographic research, the researcher is confronted with a number of ethical issues such as positionality, confidentiality, consent, safety, and reciprocity. These issues were taken seriously in the research design, and during the field research, there was a deliberate attempt to forge a relationship based on respectful collaboration between researcher and respondent. A respectful and collaborative approach to knowledge production, involving constructive dialogue minimized the risk of misinterpretation, especially considering the positionality of the researcher (non-western, middle-class male researcher, educated in the west). This included clearly outlining the research objectives, the structure and focus of the exercise, the rights of the respondent and the practical importance of the research, and allowing respondents to ask questions in the process.

Written and oral consent of the respondents was sought before each of the interviews or focus groups.\(^{19}\) Measures to ensure the confidentiality of respondents included the assurance of anonymity of key informants and focus group participants, the use of pseudonyms, and re-wording of identifying characteristics in the presentation of results. Also, in cases where the respondent requested, the anonymity of the organisation with which he/she is associated was guaranteed. With the exception of 39 interviews, all the interviews and focus groups were tape recorded and later transcribed. Tape recording the interviews offered many advantages, particularly for those interviews conducted by

---

\(^{19}\) In some cases, oral consent was preferred to written consent because of the risk written content posed to the cordial relationship forged between the researcher and the respondent. Most of the participants in the focus groups and interview respondents at the market, who could not read or write the English language, would have been very suspicious of signing their signature to something they did not understand on a piece of paper. In such cases, the material in the consent form was clearly articulated to the respondents and their oral consent sought before proceeding with the interview.
the research assistants. Since I transcribed all the tapes, I was able to essentially ‘reconstruct the interview scene’, following the discussion at length, rather than relying on just field notes from the research assistants. It also enabled me to reflect on the respondents’ interpretations to the questions and the context within which the responses were provided. The exercise proved very valuable since most of these interviews were conducted in the local dialect of the respondents.\footnote{These interviews were conducted in Akan, Ga, or Ewe, languages in which the entire research team was fluent.}

The field research was designed to ‘give voice’ to the actors on the ground- to allow the participants to tell their stories in their own words. This was premised on the belief that the actors are best positioned to articulate their stories without the researcher’s bias on the issues being investigated. The voices or articulations presented are just one part of the process of telling the story. The researcher’s task is to ‘re-articulate’ the voices garnered and blend them within the larger story being told in the final report. In this process, voices may become distorted as they are situated within a particular discourse, or de-contextualized as the meanings of expressions are lost through translations or interpretations. Also, as Rosaldo (1989) contends, the researcher is a ‘positioned subject’ and not a silent observer in the process. His or her background, position and values, and research agenda (McDowell, 1992) is brought to bear on the research, and these may direct the conversation in a certain direction, or inadvertently selectively choose which voices are heard (see Baxter and Eyles, 1997).

In re-articulating actors’ voices, the researcher’s task is to ensure that these voices are properly situated within, and apart from, their own (Weis, 2003), a task accomplished with the use of direct quotations and personal narratives. As Baxter and Eyles (1997;
508) state, quotations reveal “how meanings are expressed in the respondents’ own words, rather than the words of the researcher”. What emerges in the text, therefore, is a considerable use of quotations to allow an accurate portrayal of the respondents’ views and perceptions as much as possible. In doing so, I was faced with the challenge of interpreting certain words or expressions that do not translate verbatim into English. In such situations, I have endeavoured to maintain the original meaning of those words or expressions, and where possible, the emotions and feelings attached to those comments. I have also categorized the voices along those themes that were being discussed when they were articulated.

2.4 Conclusion

The reviews in the first part of this chapter reflect the belief that the urban food problem in the Third World is deeply embedded in the political economy of development and the rapid growth of Third World cities. To explore these relationships, the study employs discourse on these themes and observation on the ground through a triangulation of research methods. The data obtained from the empirical investigation are analyzed through qualitative narratives, and where possible, statistical methods. The organization and analysis of the data draw directly on the research methodology. The aim here is to meld the factual knowledge and perspectives from the interviews and focus groups with the secondary data in a manner which illuminates the situational and institutional framework within which cities and markets operate, food acquisition and consumption in the city, and how the city is responding to the challenges of providing adequate supplies of food to its residents.
The next chapter sets the stage for this analysis and discussion by examining the political economy of food marketing in Accra. The chapter focuses on the policy framework and institutional arrangements for food marketing in Accra and highlights for formal and informal arrangements that facilitate the supply of, and access to food in the city.
3.0 Introduction

Food supply and distribution are crucial elements of the social, economic, and political dynamics of cities. They are, however, often taken for granted by those not directly involved. This situation is even more evident within the cities of the Third World, where other problems such as health, education, housing, and infrastructure appear more visible. As a result of these factors, and more importantly, because of budget constraints, most Third World urban authorities give low priority to food supply and distribution systems, and a clear policy framework is often lacking for this sector.

Guyer (1987: 5) notes that the processes of food supply to African cities from both rural suppliers and abroad are “neither well understood nor easily controlled by central policy”. This observation extends to food distribution and marketing inside the city as well, with these activities involving a more complex web of actors and networks. In light of this observation, the central questions addressed in this chapter are: what are the underlying processes and structures that drive food marketing in Accra, and how do these operate within the city’s political, economic, social, and demographic structures?

The first section of this chapter is an examination of the institutional framework and policy environment within which food marketing operates in the city. The second section outlines the spatial distribution of markets in Accra, and highlights the implications of this pattern and the city’s growth trend regarding access to food. The third section presents an overview of the informal networks and actors that support food
markets, focussing on the structures and relationships that exist in the marketplace. This section also sets the stage for the discussion in chapter four. The final section considers the increasing importance of informal food enterprises as a readily available source of food for a large section of the city’s population.

3.1 Institutional Framework and Policy Environment

In 1988, the government of Ghana undertook a decentralization reform program to transfer some of the powers and functions of the Central government to the local level. This Local Government Law (PNDC Law 207) provided the legal framework for local governance in the country. The District was created as the basic unit of government, with the District/Municipal/Metropolitan Assembly\(^{21}\) as the executive body charged with administrative and development decision-making for the District. The Assembly was assigned with legislative functions and was also responsible for planning, finance, and providing municipal services for the residents of the district in accordance with their needs and ideals (Ayee 1997; 1999; de Lardemelle, 1996). Following this development, The Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) was established in April 1988 as the administrative, planning, and management body of Accra, which was declared a city in 1961\(^{22}\).

The AMA is the body that provides an appropriate infrastructure, service, and the enabling policy environment for food marketing in the city. Since its establishment, the

\(^{21}\) Local units are designated Districts, Municipalities, or Metropolises on the basis of spatial extent and population size, with District Assemblies representing relatively small units, Municipal Assemblies representing medium sized (predominantly urban) units, and Metropolitan Assemblies representing the large, urban units.

\(^{22}\) The First Schedule of the Local Government (AMA) establishment Legislative Instrument is LI 1615, 1995, which extensively outlines and describes the statutory functions and spatial extent of this area.
AMA has provided laws that govern the development and use of markets in the city.

Specific bye-laws to this effect are:

37. to build, equip, open, close and maintain markets, prohibit the erection of stalls in places other than markets and prevent the sale and purchase of goods or stock near established markets or elsewhere

38. to fix days and hours during each day on which a market may be held and prevent the sale and purchase of goods in markets on any day or at any hour except those fixed

39. to regulate and control markets including the fixing of and collection of stallages, rents and tolls. (LI 1615)

The AMA is therefore responsible for acquiring land for the construction of new markets, relocating existing markets, renovating existing markets, the management and administration of markets, and enforcing market rules and regulations. The AMA also collects revenue in the form of fees, levies, or fines from market traders and other commercial users of the market space (such as vehicle operators). As well, it issues licences for traders to conduct commercial activities and works with the market leadership to allocate stall to traders. In this capacity, the AMA plays a crucial role in construction, operation, and management of markets within the city.\(^{23}\)

Another key institution that plays an important role in food marketing is the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA). In line with the decentralization policy, the MOFA was restructured, and decision-making and implementation of agricultural policies and programs were devolved to the District/Municipal/Metropolitan level. The rational for this measure was to facilitate local participation in the formulation and

\(^{23}\) The AMA also has laws that govern food handling, preparation, and vending in the city. The purpose of these laws and regulation is to promote and safeguard public health (Fenteng, 2000)
implementation of agricultural policies. A new unit, the District Agricultural Development Unit (DADU), was formed to oversee food and agriculture policies and programs at the local level. Within the AMA, this unit is headed by the Metropolitan Director of Food and Agriculture, who works directly under the metropolitan Coordinating Director and the Metropolitan Chief Executive. The role of DADU is to promote the development of the agricultural sector, and is geared towards food production in general. However, one of its functions is “to ensure that new products/services and new markets are identified or created in the process of growth in the AMA” (Sackey, 1998: 26). MOFA, through the Metropolitan Agricultural Department, is responsible for providing market information for both traders and consumers, and for ensuring food security. However, this institution is heavily biased towards food production, with virtually no policies in place to ensure an effective food distribution and marketing system within the Accra Metropolis.

Apart from these two institutions, there are a number of government agencies and department that contribute to improving market conditions. These include the Town and Country Planning Department (TCPD), the Ghana Standards Board (GSB), the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), and the Food Research Institute of the Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research (FRI-CSIR). The TCPD for example assists in determining the location and size of markets as well as lorry stations. The Price Statistics Section of the GSS collects data for the calculation of the consumer price index (CPI) and the producer price index (PPI). This information is used to provide forecasts and advise government on price policies and inflation. This information, however, has very little bearing on the

24 The DADU also has oversight of Veterinary Services, Crop Services, Extension, and Fisheries.
actual prices which market customers pay for their produce, as food prices are determined solely by market conditions, seasonality of crops, and the discretion of traders.

In effect, there is a favourable policy environment for food marketing in Accra. The necessary institutional structures that will ensure an efficient food supply and marketing system appear to be in place. The existence of the appropriate policy environment, however, does not guarantee an efficient food marketing system.

3.1.1 Institutional and Infrastructural Challenges of Food Marketing in Accra

In spite of the existing legal and infrastructural framework for food distribution in the city, Accra’s food distribution and marketing system still remains poorly organized, with no strategies in place to ensure an adequate supply of food into the markets.

In the first place, the AMA, as the most important agency in managing the food marketing system, lacks the capacity to provide leadership and oversight in this regard. Consequently, adhering to, and enforcing the bye-laws pertaining to food markets fall short of the given standards, policies, and regulations both on the part of the city authorities and market patrons, including traders and customers. There is also very little collaboration among the city authorities and other agencies whose activities touch on food marketing, and no reliable data on the volume and value of food that passes through the food marketing system are available. This problem has created an information gap on the actual food needs of the city, and the effectiveness of the food marketing system in meeting the city’s food needs. The information gap is mostly filled by traders, who are usually the main source of market information such as availability of supplies and prices. Also, in the absence of adequate rules and regulations, market operators have established
their own ‘rules of the game’ which are often at par with the city’s bye-laws and have the potential to discriminate against certain types of traders.

As such, the development of a sustainable food marketing system that adequately responds to the food needs of Accra’s growing population and ensures food security is lacking. It is estimated that over 90 per cent of the households in Accra purchase the food they consume (AMA-FAO, 1998; Maxwell et. al., 2000). Given the growth rate of the city’s population, its food requirements are set to increase. However, the level of collaboration required from the city authorities and the private sector to develop a comprehensive policy for food supply in the city is clearly absent. While there is some cooperation between the AMA and market leaders, this partnership appears to be strongest in the area of revenue generation for the AMA. Markets have become one of the greatest sources of revenue for the local authorities. The Madina market for example is the number one revenue generator for its District Assembly, providing about 40 million cedis monthly to the Assembly in 2004.\(^{25}\)\(^{26}\) Consequently, the efforts of local authorities have been concentrated on effectively organizing the markets to better collect revenue. Unfortunately, this has not been accompanied with meeting the needs of traders from whom these tolls and fees are collected. Owusu and Lund (2004) similarly note in their study on the role of markets in local development that despite the fact that a significant proportion of district assembly revenue is generated from the market, investment in markets is very limited.

Besides these institutional problems, the sector is beset with a number of infrastructural problems, chief of which are poor transportation and inadequate storage

\(^{25}\) This amount is the equivalent of US$4350.00, using the exchange rate at the time of the field research.  
\(^{26}\) Interview with official from Ga East District Assembly
facilities. The demand for market infrastructure far exceeds the supply. The existing markets are therefore regularly congested, and this situation is worse on market days, leading to increased traffic tie-ups. To compound these problems, many traders have resorted to constructing their own makeshift stalls and stores without the appropriate permit and in unauthorized spaces (AMA-FAO, 1998). In some cases, some encroaching hawkers have rented parking spaces in the markets to trade, and because of the revenue potential, the authorities have allowed this practice to continue.

An analysis of market types and their spatial distribution in Accra reveals significant imbalances in the urban market infrastructure. All the major markets are located close to the downtown core (see Figure 1.1). This is important, considering that these wholesale markets offer a greater variety of foodstuffs at significantly lower prices than the smaller, neighbourhood-level markets. Also, given that Accra’s growth has proceeded largely unplanned, most of the newly developing suburbs have no official market places. For example, there is no market site east of Nungua until one reaches Tema, in spite of the almost total build up of residential accommodation in that vast area stretching over 20 km parallel to the coast. According to Nyanteng (1998), the original layout of the residential areas in the Accra Metropolis included sites for markets. Areas that were designated as markets have been encroached upon and used for residential buildings. This situation is likely to result in the development of markets at unauthorized places, or none in the newly developing residential areas. Also, the failure to provide functional markets in the newly developing areas means food marketing activities will continue to be concentrated in the inner city in spite of its congestion and the weakening infrastructure to support the effective operation of these markets.
The haphazard nature in which some markets have developed, coupled with the lack of providing the proper infrastructure in markets have exposed traders and market customers to a number of hazards. There have been frequent market fires attributed to poor or faulty electrical wiring. The provision of security, drainage, and sanitation remain poor. While cleaning the markets is a responsibility of the AMA, it has been largely carried out by the traders. These issues in particular have led to discontent among the traders, who contend that their rates and taxes go to provide services for other areas of the city.

The problems outlined above, however, need to be understood within the broader political and economic context for urban governance and administration in Ghana, as is the case in any other country in the Third World. In spite of all of the legal backing for the establishment of the AMA, it still lacks both the human resource capability and the logistics to effectively handle its newly institutionalized role. As Ansah-Koi (1993) observes, decentralization in Ghana has turned out to be an attempt by the economically beleaguered central government to push the financial costs of government onto local levels of government without relinquishing power and equipping them with adequate resources.

Faced with increasing roles and responsibilities on the one hand, and limited resources and possibilities to generate revenue on the other, city authorities focus their scarce resources on the more immediate and visible problems associated with rapid urban

---

27 The latest fire to gut one of the city’s markets occurred at the used clothing dealers’ section of the Kantamanto Market on September 22, 2008. Though there were no casualties, the fire destroyed property worth millions of cedis (thousands of dollars). The fire was suspected to relate to an electrical fault (http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=150452), retrieved 23-09-2008. A similar fire which reportedly followed an electric meter explosion at the Kaneshie Market on July 9, 2008 destroyed parts of that market.
growth. As a result, their ability to manage the existing markets and plan for new ones across the city is severely compromised.

3.1.2 Conflicts and Negotiations Over Space

One issue that deserves particular attention is the contestation over market space between market traders and the AMA. This situation can be attributed generally to the absence of a clear policy framework for food supply in Accra and the lack of attention paid to food marketing in the city. Specifically, factors such as the inability of AMA to enforce its regulations and bye-laws on food marketing in the city, and the lack of understanding and collaboration between traders and city officials have contributed to this problem. These contested spaces for food trading are marked by a cycle described by Roy (2004: 159) as “settlement, eviction and resettlement” as claims to space rotate between the power of authorities to control the use of space and the resilience of traders to make a living out of this space. The conflict over these spaces within the city plays out in two ways: the development of markets in unauthorized places; and the conversion of alleys, pavements, and roadways into make-shift sites to display foodstuff.

One of the manifestations of planning failures in Accra is the proliferation of spontaneous markets in areas across the city, especially in the newly developing areas on the urban periphery. These trading spaces are usually small in scale and comprise of a relatively few traders. These markets usually start with a few traders who congregate to sell their wares on tabletops at street corners or along major arteries in the city. With time, kiosks and stalls replace the tables and other itinerant traders congregate towards these spots, offering a variety of foodstuff to residents. Through that process, what started as a temporary arrangement by a group of traders eventually morphs into a
permanent fixture within the city, with traders laying claim to these spaces and resisting any attempts by the city authorities to evict them, or even find alternative spaces within the city for them. The AMA regards the development of such markets and the operation of these traders as a nuisance and has attempted on many occasions to control their operation. These attempts have, however, been met with stiff resistance by the traders, and in most cases, have resulted in clashes between AMA personnel and traders.

The second scenario, which is of particular concern to the AMA is the situation where market alleys and surrounding spaces, including walkways and streets close to the markets have been taken over by traders. These spaces are in a constant state of contestation over traders’ rights to use space. Traders regard these spaces as “no man’s land”, or “empty space” that they can occupy to carry out their activities. There are periods when the AMA has been successful in ridding the streets of traders, but the traders shortly return to occupy these spaces, sometimes in a matter of days. The city officials regard these spaces as property that they guard for the public. Trading activities should thus be confined to designated market spaces and not in these open, public spaces. As such, any trading activity carried out in an area not designated as a market, and without the AMA’s permission is an illegal activity.

According to one city official, most of the hawkers have stalls in the market, but they also choose to operate on the sidewalks and streets. As a result, the market stalls remain empty while the streets, alleys, and walkways have been converted into trading spaces. The traders, however, presented a very different viewpoint. During the focus group discussion at Agbogbloshie market, for example, the food traders complained that

28 This situation is not only limited to trade in food items, but more generally, consumer items.
they were not consulted during the redesign of the market, and the space allotted to them was not conducive to their businesses, especially with regards to accessibility to customers. According to them, traders in consumer products were given preferential treatment by the local authorities in the allocation process. This problem, therefore, partly reflects the lack of engagement between different groups of traders during the market redesign exercise.

It was evident from the discussions that power relations between the traders of consumer products and different kinds of foodstuff (locally produced as against imported food items) exerted considerable influence on the spatial distribution of traders and their wares in the markets surveyed for this study. In these markets, the allocation of space was inclined in favour of the relatively wealthier traders in manufactured goods while the smaller-scale, low-income traders in farm produce occupy marginal areas, open spaces and streets. Traders in high-value consumer products are usually located in the “modern”, well maintained sections of the markets that have relatively higher standards of sanitation and better access to loading and storage facilities.

For the food traders, this arrangement had the effect of limiting their daily sales, as they are located in the sections of the market that are further away from the parking lots and lorry stations and are increasingly more difficult to access. Even more unfortunate for them is the fact that they have lost a lot of their patrons. The market traders had built a web of customers for their produce, developed through arrangements such as allowing customers to purchase items on credit, assisting customers to bargain for better prices with other traders, and through referrals. This relationship between traders and their customers has been built on trust over a lengthy period of time, and it ensures
that the customer becomes a regular customer, and always purchases certain foodstuffs from a particular trader.\textsuperscript{29} With the reallocation of stalls, many customers found it difficult to locate their preferred trader; hence this severed the trader-customer relationship. In a bid to build a new customer base, the traders adopted a strategy of taking their wares to customers; the rationale for this being, when one had successfully attracted new customers, they would then be directed to their stall in the market. This strategy was also a way of re-establishing contact with old clients. This statement from a participant in the focus group says it all: “it is on the streets that we find our customers, not in the market”.

Fundamental to the claim over space between urban traders and city authorities is the issue of who gets to use space which forms part of the public domain for what. While city authorities aim to organize space in a manner that beautifies the city, others seek to use this space to support their livelihoods (Brown, 2006a; 2006b; Cross, 2000). For the latter group, these spaces represent sites where opportunities for livelihood activities exist. These sites are selected for trading because of the particular advantage of easy access to a steady stream of potential clients (see Bromely, 2000). In a study of the location of small scale production and service enterprises in Accra, Yankson (2000) found that for many traders, the attraction of customers was key to site selection. A wider problem, Yankson suggests, is the failure of planners to adequately accommodate

\textsuperscript{29} Even though this relationship has an economic basis (where the customer believes they get a better deal in terms of quality and price per quantity purchased), it appears to be more social than economic. An investigation into this phenomenon revealed that the customer could, in fact, purchase the same quantity of foodstuffs at a lower price from another trader due to the arbitrary nature of prices. These trader-customer relationships are quite extensive and to some degree, reduce competition among traders.
informal activities with the urban built environment, despite a positive change of attitude towards this sector by the authorities.

The ways in which these spaces are contested demonstrate the lack of understanding between urban planning regimes and the occupants of these spaces, and this has contributed to the collusion between aspirations for a beautiful city and the need to secure a livelihood in the city. These spaces will, therefore, continue to be contested both within and outside the markets, as traders try to support their livelihoods, and the AMA fights back to guard public property and asserts its authority as custodian of the public good.

3.2 The “Market Dynamics”: Players and Produce

The typical market setting in Accra presents the ‘outside observer’ with an image of chaos and anarchy: numerous sellers offering the same produce with little or no variability in prices; haggling over prices of food items; crowding; and noise! Noise from different categories of traders, customers, truck pushers, the occasional tax collector, and kayayeis just to mention a few. Beneath this image, however, exists a complex network of actors with well defined roles within the market space, and a highly organized institutional structure that maintains the order within this apparent chaos. The true picture only emerges when one carefully examines the flow of information, people, and commodities within this space. It is the effective functioning of this network that sustains the movement of food into and out of the markets, and informs how much traders sell their foodstuffs within the market. In view of the institutional lapses and infrastructural

---

30 Porter girls, usually from the northern regions of Ghana, who migrate to the cities to eke out a living. Their main source of livelihood is carrying loads in large tin bowls on their heads for market patrons.
challenges to food marketing noted in the previous section, the functioning of this network and the roles of its actors are crucial to the continuous supply of food into the city.

Previous studies on markets in West Africa have shown that the ability of market traders to organize themselves is essential to the process of food supply into cities. As Lyon (2003) points out, “traders associations are important players in the agricultural markets of Ghana” (p. 11), playing numerous roles ranging from providing information on market prices, supplies of produce, price negotiations, settling disputes, and contract enforcement. While the importance of these trader associations has a historical dimension (ibid), they have become even more relevant in the contemporary urban food marketing system, given the swelling number of traders operating in these markets, and the diverse range of food produce they provide. Providing food to a rapidly growing city with increasing levels of poverty requires a proper understanding of the organization and structure of these networks, the activities of, and power relations between the actors, and the support mechanisms that ensure their internal cohesion.

3.2.1 Market Queens and Market Associations

Perhaps the most visible, and to a very large extent powerful player within the market space is the market queen. These women are undoubtedly the central figures of authority in the market space, exerting considerable influence in the markets where they operate. As such, their role and authority have been the subject of great controversy

31 See for example Porter et. al. (2007) and Lyon (2003) for an extensive review of the literature on this subject.
32 The title “queen” symbolizes authority and draws on the traditional Ghanaian institution of chieftaincy.
among policy makers and academics, sometimes being accused of operating cartels and exploiting producers and consumers and manipulating traders, while at other times winning praise for the ingenuity in keeping food flowing into the city. Porter et. al (2007) suggest that although there are instances of monopolistic control, these are limited to specific parts of the marketing chain.

Each market has a queen for every major food produce, and these queens operate under the paramount market queen. In this sense, at the Achimota market for example, there is the “tomato queen”, “yam queen”, etc. Market queens are central to the day-to-day organization of markets. Conversations with the paramount queen at Achimota market revealed an organizational structure comprising the paramount market queen as the head, assisted by her vice, a general secretary, a financial secretary, a treasurer, a group of advisors, and queens for the major food products sold at the market. At the Madina market, a similar structure existed, with the market associations headed by the produce queen which reports to an ‘Executive Board’ with a chairperson and secretary/administrator. This organizational set up is primarily responsible for building and sustaining cooperation within the market, and running the affairs of the market. It also provides a crucial link between traders and city authorities.

Because of their highly organized hierarchical structure, market queens are instrumental in raising revenue and collecting tolls from traders on behalf of the AMA. This task would be almost impossible for the AMA, given the high numbers of iterant food traders and the difficulty of identifying, locating, and taxing them. The market queen also allocates space and grants permission to trade in the market, and they play an important social role towards retailers and traders, organizing them for cleanup
campaigns and other educational activities to raise awareness on food hygiene in the market.

It is worthy of note, however, that the revenue collection role of market queens on behalf of the AMA has created a scenario where some traders feel that their leaders are cooperating with the AMA in order to tax them unnecessarily. During the focus group discussions, some of the traders expressed concern about the cordial relationship between the market leadership and the AMA. One participant put it this way:

“the AMA does not do anything for us. We clean this market ourselves. They do not provide us with any facilities or amenities that will make our work here less burdensome. So why should we continue to pay money to them everyday? The queen makes it too easy for them to come in here and collect their tolls, yet these tolls do not benefit us in any way” (trader, Agbogbloshie market).

There was, therefore, a general sense of discontent against the AMA by the traders, as the traders viewed the AMA as merely concerned with revenue collection rather than the efficient operation and management of the markets. The traders expressed dissatisfaction about how much taxes they pay to the city authorities, and the rate at which these taxes increase on an annual basis. Table 3.1 shows the fees paid by wholesalers of different food produce and their rates of increases between 2001 and 2004. On the other hand, the market queens were commended for their role in “speaking up” for their members in other matters involving the traders and the AMA, and seeking the welfare of their members.

33 This issue is related to a bigger problem of revenue generation in Third World cities discussed by Davis (2006), where as a result of poor tax collection policies and instruments, a large section of the urban population (most notably the urban elites and middle class) are able to evade municipal taxes. This situation plays more starkly in Accra, where because of the ease of collecting taxes through the market leadership, the AMA concentrates its efforts on market fees and market traders subsequently bear a significant portion of the tax burden. A case in point is the Madina market, which as mentioned earlier, is the largest source of revenue for its District Assembly.
### Table 3.1- Market Fees for Selected Food Wholesaler, 2001 and 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category/Produce</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Charge (in cedis)</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fruits</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>seat</td>
<td></td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water mellon</td>
<td>big bag</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pineapples</td>
<td>big bag</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pawpaw</td>
<td>mini bag</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Roots and Tubers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassava</td>
<td>maxi bag</td>
<td></td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocoyam</td>
<td>maxi bag</td>
<td></td>
<td>600</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plantain</td>
<td>pole (bunch)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>9000</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yam</td>
<td>100 tubers</td>
<td></td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vegetables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden Eggs</td>
<td>big bag</td>
<td></td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onion</td>
<td>maxi bag</td>
<td></td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okro</td>
<td>big basket</td>
<td></td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>Crate</td>
<td></td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grains</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cola nuts</td>
<td>maxi bag</td>
<td></td>
<td>600</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gari</td>
<td>tall bag</td>
<td></td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground nuts</td>
<td>maxi bag</td>
<td></td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>maxi bag</td>
<td></td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fish</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dried fish</td>
<td>big basket</td>
<td></td>
<td>800</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salted fish</td>
<td>big basket</td>
<td></td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoked fish</td>
<td>big basket</td>
<td></td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Market queens operate through their associations; a group of traders selling similar products within the market. The market association provides the mechanism through which internal cohesion is achieved. In her extensive study on market traders in Kumasi, Ghana, Clark (1994: 248) notes that these associations are the “most cohesive collegial sets” within the market. She further notes that market queens can rely on the support of their members, and while accusations of manipulating members’ loyalty for
financial gain has often be labelled against these leaders, the level of consensus required in decision making makes this exploitation unlikely. Although membership in the association is voluntary, this is hardly so in reality. One can hardly legitimize their place in the market without belonging to the association. A strong argument can be made, however, that belonging to the association does present enormous benefits to the traders. It is within the association that the welfare of traders and market improvements are articulated and pursued. The most direct benefits recounted by traders during the field survey were the security provided for food prices, and the ability to retail goods on credit. These benefits are discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

3.2.2 Products, Pricing and Selling

Accra is a deficit food producing area, and most of the food consumed in the city originates from within the country. Cereals (rice millet, sorghum, and maize), yam, vegetables, beans, and livestock come mainly from the northern savanna and the forest zone. The coastal zone is the major source of fish and some vegetables. Imported food, particularly rice, processed and canned foods including vegetables, beef and fish products, and edible oils also feature prominently in the city’s food system (AMA-FAO, 1998; Nyanteng, 1998).

Food prices are set and regulated by the market associations, although individual traders have some minor degree of flexibility in determining their own prices, especially at the retail level. Price setting is related more to supply conditions than demand. This is because the demand for food is relatively more stable than the supply. Price data obtained from the Price Statistics Section of the Ghana Statistical Service for the period
January 2000 to June 2004 indicate an upward trend for all the major food commodities. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 below illustrate the price trends for some of the most common food items in a typical household diet.

Judging from the price trends for the selected commodities, it is evident that prices will continue to rise with time, especially due to the transport costs; with implications for household food availability, if this is not accompanied by rising household incomes. Because of the price fixing role of market associations, their leaders have been accused of manipulating food prices. Clark’s study, as well as previous studies on this issue in other West African cities found that these allegations are not supported by the evidence (Amonoo, 1975; Gore, 1978; cited in Clark, 1994). Also, the influx of imported food on the local markets, together with the accompanying shift in consumer preference towards these foods, have had a moderating effect on escalating food prices. The factors that appear to have a huge impact on food supply and consequently prices in Accra are the irregular flow of food into the markets, due largely to seasonality in domestic production, and the cost of transporting food from the hinterland. As the city’s population increases, and its food needs become more complex, the demand for food will grow, and this will most likely have a positive impact on food prices.
Figure 3.1- Price Trends for Selected Grains, 2000 - 2004

Source: Ghana Statistical Service

Figure 3.2- Price Trend for Selected Vegetables, 2000 – 2004

Source: Ghana Statistical Service

34 Annual average prices. 2004 data captures the period January to June.
3.3 Informal Food Enterprises

A feature of the urbanization process has been the development of informal food supply systems. Informal food enterprises differ considerably in scale of operation, variety, marketing techniques, environment, and ownership. These enterprises offer easily accessible and cheap ready-to-eat food to urban residents. The proliferation of such food outlets comes as no surprise, considering the broad shifts in urban economic activities and the socio-demographic mix of urban spaces. This trend represents an important livelihood strategy developed by the urban poor to cope with the challenges of urban living. Several empirical studies indicate that informal food enterprises have great potential in supporting and sustaining quality of life of both vendors and consumers (Acho Chi, 2002; Drakakis-Smith, 1997; Fass, 1995; Rogerson, 1983; Tinker, 1997). The overriding consensus among these studies is that small-scale, food retail activities ought to be encouraged and effectively incorporated into city planning regimes.

Accra street foods have become very popular, especially with the low- to middle-income workforce and students in general35. This activity provides employment to many, particularly those involved in its production, particularly suppliers of raw produce, food processors, and vendors, while contributing significantly to the food security of working men, women, and children (Johnson and Yamson, 2000). The accepted definition of street foods within policy circles in Accra is “ready-to-eat foods and beverages prepared and/or sold by vendors and hawkers especially on streets and other similar public places”

35 It is easily assumed that only poor, low-income urban households consume street foods. However, well-to-do households also patronise informal food vendors to supplement home-prepared meals. Winarno and Allain (1991) for example assert that street food consumption patterns are determined mainly by availability and accessibility, rather than by incomes. Nevertheless, it is agreed that without informal food enterprises, food security of low-income families would be severely affected.
(FAO, 1989; see Asiedu, 2000; Ntsiful, 2000). This rather narrow definition, however, includes a wider range of small-scale, food enterprises including itinerant food vendors, chop bars, and ‘fast food’ joints\(^\text{36}\) (popularly known as check-check) operated from kiosks, make shift stalls, and freight containers, to low-end restaurants, workers’ canteens, and eateries. Informal food enterprises are found in almost all public and commercial places with a high concentration of human activities. Popular sites for both mobile and permanent food vendors are around offices and factories, schools, construction sites, market places, lorry stations, and along virtually all the major streets of Accra. It is worthy of note that this activity is highly gendered, being dominated by women\(^\text{37}\), and involving to a large extent unpaid family labour.

Perhaps the most basic characteristic feature of informal food enterprises in Accra is the nature of food served. This sector relies extensively on agricultural produce including plantain, cassava, maize, rice, yams, fruits, vegetables, fish, and livestock. The menu consists largely of local meals such as boiled rice and stew, waakye (rice and beans), banku, kenkey, fufu, red-red (fried plantain with beans), fried/roasted plantain, yam, or cocoyam with peanuts. Some outlets also specialize in snacks, including pastries, sandwiches, and beverages. Apart from the demand for these ready-made foods, other factors such as the low capital investment required, low levels of technology and skills, and readily available raw materials and market have also enhanced the growth of the sector (Asiedu, 2000; Ntsiful, 2000).

\(^{36}\) These ‘fast food’ joints are a hybrid between the traditional chop-bar and low-end styled restaurant.

\(^{37}\) The gendered nature of the informal food sector is consistent with patterns observed elsewhere. See Tinker, 1997; Acho-Chi, 2002.
In contrast to the potential benefits, the sector also poses a considerable threat to public health and the nutritional status of those who rely on street foods. Some street vendors work under unsanitary conditions and often possess limited or no training in food hygiene or food safety practices\(^3\). These conditions can compromise the hygienic preparation, storage and sale of the food. The lack of attention to food hygiene, and poor access to clean water or waste disposal, for example, can turn a quick, tasty meal into an unfortunate experience of food poisoning. Also, in a bid to cut down cost and maximize profits, food vendors may utilize low quality ingredients (Opare-Obisaw et. al., 2000). This practice can significantly reduce the nutritional quality of foods consumed.

During discussions with patrons of street foods, however, most of them expressed satisfaction with the nutritious quality of foods consumed. One such consumer responded, “what are you talking about? If this food is unhealthy, everybody in these offices you see here should be in the hospital or dead by now”, to the suggestion that they may be more susceptible to food and water-borne diseases. Interestingly, food taste and quantity for price paid were deemed more important than nutritional quality as factors that determined the choice of food and vendor. While it cannot be assumed that consumers are not quality conscious, it is apparent that their lack of attention paid to the nutritional value of the foods they consume does contribute to the low quality of some street foods. It is also difficult to examine the extent to which consumer demands would compel food vendors to adopt safer and more hygienic food production and handling practices that would increase the quality and safety of street foods in Accra.

---

\(^3\) A study conducted on the street food situation in Accra between 1995 and 1996 revealed that 94% of street food vendors were uneducated and unskilled women with no formal training in good food preparation and delivery practices (Ntsiful, 2000).
Also of importance here is the relationship between the cost of home-prepared food and street-vended food. Most of the patrons interviewed perceived that it costs more to prepare their own meals at home, considering the cost of procuring ingredients and fuel, the inconvenience, and the fact that they do not possess the facilities to store cooked food for long periods. “Do you know what is involved in preparing a meal of fufu and soup, or even ‘red-red’? You try it and you will understand what I mean”, one respondent said to buttress his point. It should be pointed out that even in households where home-prepared meals constitute the only source of food, meals are supplemented by purchasing some foods that are cumbersome, uneconomical, and too time consuming to prepare at home, especially in small quantities. A case in point here is kenkey; or waakye. There are also the ‘delicacies’ such as kelewele (cubes of ripe plantain coated in hot spices, and then fried), fried yam and chofi (turkey tail), chichinga (kebab, mainly meat), and the like that are sold at street corners and other favourite spots, usually after sunset.

With the realization of an increasing reliance on street foods by a growing proportion of the urban population, and the potential benefits and health hazards posed by this trend, city officials and other policy makers and stakeholders in the food sector are beginning to pay some attention to this sector. City officials are now more tolerant with street food operators and attempt to address the issue of food safety through educating food vendors and the general public and enforcing existing bye-laws governing food handling, preparation, and vending. In spite of these efforts, monitoring and regulating

---

39 The AMA regulates and monitors informal food enterprises through bye-laws, granting licenses, and carrying out site inspections. These mechanisms have been in effect since the establishment of the AMA, and were initially targeted at safeguarding public health in general. In effect, therefore, there is adequate
this sector still presents a significant challenge to the authorities, given the increasing numbers of food vendors. This situation is further complicated by their diversity, temporary and itinerant nature. Some food vendors operate only in the evenings and weekends (to supplement their income from other sources), thus making it almost impossible to monitor or regulate their activities. The Food Research Institute of the Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research and the Nguochi Memorial Institute for Medical Research have been actively involved in conducting research and disseminating information on the safety of street foods in Accra\textsuperscript{40}.

While the informal food sector does contribute significantly to the food situation of the urban poor in particular, it is difficult to constructively assess its impact on the urban food system, poverty reduction, and quality of life in general. It is only speculated, and rightly so, that the annual turnover of this sector is very high, considering also the large amounts of agricultural inputs required (Ntsiful, 2000)\textsuperscript{41}. Secondly, although it is very important for this sector to be regulated and monitored in the interest of public health, it is crucial to do so in cooperation with food operators in order not to undermine the important role this sector plays in the urban economy through providing affordable, nutritious\textsuperscript{42} and easily accessible food and incomes. Food vendors complained about harassment from the authorities and unrealistic taxes and demands imposed on them. Some of the vendors claimed they had not taken the necessary steps to register their provision to ensure the reliance on street foods does not jeopardize public health. The problem here lies with enforcing the rules and regulations.

\textsuperscript{40} Other agencies involved here are the Food and Drugs Board and the Ghana Standards Board.

\textsuperscript{41} Operators interviewed were reluctant to disclose their profit margin for fear of this information being used as a basis to increase their taxes. Some of the vendors intimated that local authorities and policy makers are only interested in their activities because of the taxes they will derive from this sector.

\textsuperscript{42} The nutritious aspect of street foods remains questionable.
business or obtain the required licence to operate because once they did, they would be under the radar of the AMA.

In view of the growing number of urban residents and the increasing number of poor among them and the role street foods have in providing food and income to the urban poor, the street food trade deserves recognition by local and national authorities and the attention of urban policy makers, in order to improve the opportunities of vendors to ensure their livelihood and the availability of cheap, safe and nutritious food for low-income consumers.

3.4 Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter has outlined the policy framework for food marketing in Accra, and highlighted some of the major problems facing this sector. The discussion has shown that food supply into the market is largely an informal activity with very little regulatory and institutional support. Also captured in the discussion is the crucial role of the market leadership in both ensuring the supply of food into the markets, and maintaining cooperation amongst traders within the markets. At the current estimated growth rate of 4% per annum, Accra’s population is expected to exceed 3 million by year 2020. This growth in population will lead to an increased demand for a wide variety of food. Accra’s market infrastructure should therefore be planned to accommodate the expected rise in demand. Achieving this goal will involve city authorities forging stronger ties that extend beyond the market queens to the traders in these markets.
In the next chapter, the discussion shifts to activities of traders, who are key players in food marketing in the city. The chapter explores how changes within the city’s social and economic structure are affecting traders within the markets and how traders are responding to these changes. The analysis and discussion will show that the changing socio-economic structure, coupled with the weakened policy framework for food marketing in the city, has differential impacts on the mix of traders operating within and across the different markets. Understanding these types of linkages and relationships, and how they are evolving, is essential to ensuring food security in Accra.
CHAPTER FOUR

VOICES FROM THE GROUND: WHAT MARKET TRADERS ARE SAYING

4.0 Introduction

Market traders are arguably the most important actors in food supply and distribution of Accra. Given the crucial role of market traders, listening with a keen ear to their issues and concerns will provide significant insights into one of the most critical linkages in the urban food system. As well, it will offer a better understanding of the implications of current approaches and policies to the issues involved, and also illuminate areas in which they are lacking. This chapter, therefore, goes beyond the conceptual issues and institutional framework for food delivery, to listen to the voices of a cross section of traders from the three markets involved in this study. This chapter draws heavily on my ethnographic studies conducted in the markets. Included in the text are quotations from the various focus group discussions, semi-structured personal interviews, and non-random informal conversations held with the traders. The quotes included in this chapter represent certain themes, and the generalizations represent an amalgam of the voices representing those themes.

The discussion, analysis and generalizations, are based on these personal observation of the traders and their activities. This collection of opinions and stories provides a compelling account of the strategies which traders adopt to stay in business, and how these strategies keep food flowing into the markets and ultimately into households. Furthermore, it highlights the impact of individual initiatives on urban issues, in this case food availability, acquisition, and consumption. The findings show
that urban food provision in the Third World city is not the result of a grand plan, but of
the actions of myriad of traders operating in different market places (both official and
unauthorized) with a broad set of regulations and laws.

The chapter begins with a consideration of the traders’ perceptions of the food
situation in the city and examines the extent to which their activities reflect increasing
demand for food. The discussion then turns to an exploration of the constraints and needs
expressed by the traders, and the strategies they adopt to remain in business at the market,
employing a case study approach. The last part of the chapter critically evaluates the role
of market traders in providing sufficient quantities of food that are affordable for the
rapidly expanding city and its growing population, by inductively generalizing from the
individual perspectives.

4.1 Food Traders in the Urban Economy: Making Ends Meet or Feeding the
City?

In chapter three (3.4), the importance of informal food enterprises in the food
economy was highlighted, focusing on the potential of this sector in sustaining the quality
of life for both vendors and consumers. This discussion, however, needs to be placed
within the broader context of the burgeoning and dynamic informal economy in cities of
the Third World. Several studies on the urban economy of poor countries have already
stressed the importance of the informal sector in providing jobs and incomes to large
sections of the urban populations in these countries. This situation is no different in
Accra, where most primary livelihoods are based on the myriad of activities comprising
the informal sector, rather than on wage earning jobs in the formal economy. A study by
the International Food Policy Research Institute in Accra estimates that the ratio of
informal to formal sector employment in Accra is 7:1, compared to 2:1 about 15 years ago (Maxwell et. al., 2000). Yankson’s work on urban informality in Accra also notes the “many and varied roles” of this sector in the national and urban economies (2000: 313).

One of the dominant features of Accra’s informal economy is its gendered nature. While men typically engage in skilled and unskilled labour, women generally tend to be self-employed in food trading activities. Although a number of factors have contributed to this trend, the traditional role of women in Ghanaian society appears to be the predominant factor. Robertson (1974) for example, describes how the residential pattern of Ga society allows Ga women to dominate retail trade in Accra and transmit sophisticated business techniques to adjacent generations through an apprenticeship system. As a result, market trading is a predominantly female activity. In fact, other studies on markets in West African cities suggest that women account for over 90% of all market traders (see Brown 2006c: 63), and this indicates the central role women play in the supply and distribution of food to households within the city (see for example Clark 1994; Robertson, 1984; 1995).

The declining prospect of employment for women in other sectors of the urban economy has undoubtedly led to an increased participation of women in food trade. However, it is not clear whether this trend also related to the increasing demand for food in the rapidly growing city. Also, the extent to which this trend significantly improves food availability and security in the city, or improves the quality of life of women engaged in the food trade remains questionable. To explore these relationships, food

43 Quality of life as discussed here relates to job security and incomes.
traders were engaged in a dialogue on three key issues: whether the food situation in Accra is improving or deteriorating; whether food trade is a viable and sustainable source of income in the long term; and the impact of the increased number of food outlets on trading activities in the major markets?

Generating consensus on any of the three issues proved almost impossible. The differences in opinion appeared to stem from a tension between different groups of traders\textsuperscript{44}. This tension was most apparent between traders who had been in the market business for a considerable period of time (typically ten years or more) versus the relatively new traders (typically three years or less); wholesale and large-scale vendors versus retailers or small-scale traders; and traders in locally produced foodstuffs versus traders of imported food items. This dichotomy provides a lens through which to explore the increasing stratification of traders within the market, and the differentiation in access to resources and the support required to succeed in the trade. These differences also provide an explanation to the attitudes and voices associated with the different groups of traders that participated in the focus group discussions and interviews.

\subsection*{4.1.1 Food Availability}

From the perspective of market traders, the surge in food trading activities across the city has had a positive impact on the food supply in the city. This is because food trading activities were not limited to the designated markets, but extended into the city’s neighbourhoods through the activities of itinerant food vendors, hawkers, and the

\textsuperscript{44} This tension is perceived based on my own observations at the markets, and it centred largely on control of activities in the market and level of support from the AMA (which indicated the importance of some types of trade over others).
operation of markets in unauthorized places. In addition to the constant supply of food from the rural areas, the increase in food supply in the city can partly be attributed to import liberalization under structural adjustment and the influx of imported, processed and semi-processed foods (see Levin, 1995).

Traders who had been in the business for a considerable period of time tended to see the overall food situation as improving. According to one such participant in the discussion,

“now food is everywhere. In every corner you will find a market, and the food is cheaper too ... In the past, it was more difficult getting food from the rural areas into the city. It was a risky business, and it took a long time... But now, we have regular supply, and so we are able to charge lower prices so that everybody can buy food.”

(focus group participant, Agbobgloshie)

At the same discussion table, however, another participant expressed that although there is no food shortage in the city, it is becoming more difficult to purchase adequate quantities of food:

“I completely disagree. It is true that there is food, but people can’t buy it because it is too expensive ... My sales have been declining daily. Yes, there is food, but what is the point if the food is there and people cannot buy it?”

(focus group discussion, Agbobgloshie)

Generally, there was a sense that although the food situation in the city was not dire, it appears to be so because of the difficulty that may be encountered in purchasing food. In another focus group on the same issue, one participant expressed that:

“when people complain that there is no food, it is not really true; because you find people selling food everywhere in Accra. The problem is that the customers complain that the food is too expensive... so that is why they may say food is not available.”

45 This participant attributed the increased supply of food to better agricultural policies by the government that have increased agricultural output, and also to better infrastructure, particularly improvements to the road network.
It is worthy of note that all the participants in this group agreed to the fact that physical quantities of food was not really an issue. Food availability was conceived in relation to food prices and if people could afford to buy sufficient quantities for their households. As succinctly put by one of the traders,

“markets follow people into their neighbourhoods, but the food in the markets does not follow people into their homes. People have to come into the market to buy the food. It is only when people have money to buy the food that the food follows them into their homes.”

(focus group discussion, Achimota)

The differences in opinion and the tensions between the traders play out further when the traders were asked to explain the underlying causes of the problem- if indeed there was a problem with food availability. From the wholesalers’ point of view, if food prices and subsequently availability was a problem, it was because of the activities of the retailers:

“when we bring the food into this market, we charge reasonable prices... but when they (referring to retailers) take the food into the smaller markets, they then charge twice or three times the prices we give them. Meanwhile, we give them a discount because we are all in the business together ... but if they go and charge exorbitant prices, how can people buy the food they sell?”

(focus group discussion, Agbobgloshie)

The retailers contended that people’s inability to buy food was a reflection of the weakening economic situation in the country, and Accra in particular, and not the result of their activities. While these women all traded in the same markets, the wholesalers were more likely to have customers who would purchase food in bulk and benefit from the cost savings associated with it. The retailers on the other hand served a more volatile customer base that purchased food in smaller quantities, and were more likely to pay
higher prices for their food. Their customers tended to be from the poorer neighbourhoods of the city and thus related the price they paid for food to the general economic hardships within the city. It is therefore important to reassess how the increasing number of food traders directly meets the food needs of all sections of the city’s population.

The traders also acknowledged that the city’s food base was becoming increasingly diversified. As one of the participants noted,

“now you have different kinds of food. If you want tomatoes for example, you can buy the ‘biaca’ or salsa\textsuperscript{46} or the real tomato. Also if you want to eat fufu, you can buy ‘neat fufu’ instead of cassava and plantain. So you see, you can get everything in the market. It all depends on your taste.”

(focus group discussion, Madina)

Most of the small scale traders and retailers sold a combination of imported and locally produced food, whereas the large scale, wholesale traders concentrated on either bulk sale of imported food products or locally produced foodstuff.

There was a lot of discussion on the impact of imported food on the traders’ livelihood, incomes, and food availability. Vendors of imported food revealed that imported food items sold faster than the locally produced foodstuff. A number of reasons were cited for this trend. First, imported food, especially processed food products were cheaper than locally processed food products. Secondly, there was a ready supply of these products, compared to local agricultural products for which supply fluctuated with the season. Related to this factor was the fact that imported products could be stored for a longer period of time. The third factor was packaging, as the traders contended that imported food products were better packed, labelled, and more appealing to customers

\textsuperscript{46} Bianca and Salsa represent different brands of imported tomato puree.
than the locally produced ones. In addition to these factors, there was a quality consideration, stemming for a perception that imported food was always better that local.

The crucial issue is that the influx of imported products, which some contented could not match the nutritional value of locally produced food, was having the effect of reducing the demand for local products. In all the focus groups, it was apparent that a significant number of traders, who sold both local and imported food, were focusing their efforts more on the imported processed food at the expense of locally produced food. According to one participant,

“our profit margin on the unprocessed food is declining, because we can only store these foods for only a short period of time, and if people do not buy these items they only rot and we lose all our investment... This causes a lot of headache for us. But if you invest in packaged foods, you can quickly recoup your investment with a profit as these sell faster ... So at the end of the day, you have your peace of mind!” (focus group discussion, Agbobgloshie)

This narrative touches on a variety of subjects, including the weakening market infrastructure for locally produced food. More importantly, it reveals the anxiety and uncertainty that accompany trading in locally produced and unprocessed foodstuff versus the peace of mind that comes with selling processed or imported food. Many traders, it turned out, find it more convenient to sell processed food than fresh produce as the cost of trading in the latter is becoming much higher compared to trading in the latter. In addition, the increasing volume of imported food and that processed locally, as well as improvements in their distribution, has ensured its steady supply to traders. This is in

---

47 The customer surveys further revealed that apart from cost, the most important reason for choosing imported processed food over locally produced food was convenience. Because these foods are partially processed, they are less cumbersome and require less time to prepare. This shift is important because it also signifies a shift in urban lifestyles and social dynamic, where more people work longer hours and seldom have the time required to prepare meals from basic, raw ingredients. This shift, therefore, has potential consequences for household dietary patterns and nutritional status (see Ruel et al, 1999).
stark contrast to the seasonality and unpredictable nature of food supply from the hinterland, which create alternating periods of glut (with lower prices and reduced profits) and scarcity (with higher prices and reduced demand). This situation could have long term consequences for the mix of food that is available within the city.

When viewed in light of the increasing number of traders and the diverse range of food at the markets, a claim can be made that food supply into the city has improved. However, there is no evidence that this increase is driven by the increased demand for food by the city’s residents. Rather, this increase is linked to the paucity of employment and the reliance on informal livelihood strategies by women in the city. Secondly, such a claim masks the more crucial issues of whether the food needs of the various sections of Accra’s population are being adequately met, or the sustainability of food vending as a livelihood strategy for women involved in the trade. These are the issues that require the attention of policy makers and planners in the city.

4.1.2 Job Security in the Food Business

The second dimension of women’s work in urban food marketing that was explored was the long-term prospects of employment for the women engaged in the trade. At the centre of the discussion was whether the increasing number of traders in the markets and other open spaces in the city was a result of the increased demand for food, and if this situation presented economic opportunities for the food traders. The discussions indicate that different interrelated factors come into play to influence women’s perceptions on their job security in the food trade. These factors include the size of the trader’s business, length of stay in the trade, and level of support from city
authorities.

Perceptions on job security were clearly related to one’s length of stay in business at the market and size of business. The most successful traders, mostly wholesalers and large retailers of locally produced foodstuff were those who felt most secured in the food trade. The discussions also revealed that this group of traders was introduced to the food trade through family ties, as explained by this participant:

“I have been in this business for over 30 years now. I have been trading since I was a teenager—that is how a lot of us started. My late mother was a very successful tomato trader, and she got my sisters and I involved in her business at Makola market. Initially, we were all assisting our mother, performing various functions for her, but as time went on I started going to the village myself and getting different varieties of food. I then moved on to start my own business here. The volume of food that I handle has increased dramatically, and I even employ people to help me in my business. I have numerous customers from the various markets and different areas of Accra... For me, this is a very profitable venture”.

(focus group discussion, Agbobgloshie)

This group of traders had a reliable supply of food from the rural areas and a readily available market comprising other traders, institutions, and households within the city.

The relatively new entrants were not so optimistic. While these traders appeared to be fully integrated within the market systems, they expressed dissatisfaction with their trade. One participant provided a very illuminating view of this issue:

“there are profits to be reaped in the food business, but the cost of trading is unreasonably high, and eventually, this drives the cost of food up. When food prices go up, people cannot afford it so we are forced to lower the price again, and then our profit drops. The reason why most of us are in this business is that we cannot afford to stay home doing nothing. As for trading, anyone can trade. You do not need any special skill to trade. So when you do not have work and you have some small money somewhere, you can buy small quantities of food and then sell to make a profit. If even the profit is one cedi, it is something. But I challenge you to go round this market, talk to a lot of us and you will find that if

---

48 The traders interviewed were all members of the traders’ associations in their respective markets, paid their association dues and AMA tolls, and participated in the daily susu (savings) program.
we should get another job somewhere, we will all leave this business”.
(focus group discussion, Agbobgloshie)

A significant observation in this regard was the fact that these traders had not made any investments in the market to improve their lot.

This outlook was corroborated during the personal interviews, whereby a disproportionately large number of the small-scale traders had two major employment goals. The first aspiration was to save enough capital to open up their own business and move beyond petty trading. The second goal was to secure a job with a regular salary, even if it is with a low pay- compared to the variable nature of returns associated with the food trade. For these traders, trading in food was a short-term measure as they contemplated the prospect of other income generating activities in the city. The startling aspect of these interviews was the fact that all the traders interviewed were considering moving from the food trade into dealing in consumer goods. They considered the trade in locally produced foodstuffs as a monopoly, organized around the activities of the *manye* or *ahemaa* (market queen) of that specific produce and their clients.

The focus group discussions also revealed traders’ perception on how their work is regarded in the city. The statements cited below represented some opinions expressed on the issue from all three markets:

“nobody treats us with any kind of respect... some customers are so rude and regard us as nobodies in society... sometimes it is as if we beg them to buy food”
(focus group discussion, Achimota)

“those who are not in this business do not know the hardships we face before bringing them the food they eat... some people think this is a job for lazy people, but we work harder than people in other occupations”
(focus group discussion, Agbobgloshie)
“in this market, if you don’t have a big store, you don’t have a say in anything. When the ‘big people’ and our elders are taking any decision that concerns us, we do not know anything about it... we only get to know after the fact”
(focus group discussion, Madina)

The traders’ contribution to the city’s food stock and its revenue base tends to be grossly undervalued by most people in the city and even by the authorities. These attitudes have a debilitating effect on traders’ morale and contribute to the weakening bargaining position of traders within the city. As many of the traders intimated, the low priority paid to their needs in the market is indicative of the low value placed on traders and their activities, despite the vital role they play in generating revenue and providing food for sustenance. An interesting connection was also made to how traders’ activities generate employment in the city. A participant in the discussion at Achimota market stated that:

“when we consider how markets create jobs, it is not for us the traders alone...it covers a whole lot of people... some of the people who work at the Okai Koi (sub-District) office get their job because of us; the market coordinators, the toll collectors, cleaners, inspectors, ... Because of what we do, the truck drivers who travel to the villages to bring the food here also have a job... so our work is very important because it allows other people to also get a job”
(focus group discussion, Achimota)

Such insightful comments show that because of the strong dependencies that exist between the food trade and other urban informal activities, creating an environment that is conducive for food traders is essential for employment in other sectors within the city.

The viability of food trade as a secure source of livelihood in the city should, therefore, not be taken for granted. Many earlier works on market traders have noted how the “feminisation of marketplace trade” (Overa, 1998; cited in Owusu and Lund, 2004: 118) has engendered greater self reliance, confidence, economic and political
independence, status, and autonomy in spite of the dire challenges they face\textsuperscript{49}. These claims, however, need to be reviewed now in terms of the transformation occurring within the contemporary African city and how more women are being pushed into the food trade out of necessity to earn a living to secure or supplement household incomes.

Therefore, in as much as Accra’s markets are congested and attracting new traders, this trend represents a coping mechanism for an increasing number of people in the urban economy. The large number of traders in the market indicates that there are very limited barriers of entry into these markets. This can be attributed to the fact that the initial outlay of capital required is low\textsuperscript{50} and also that there are no specialized skills or equipment needed for the trade, as the traders adopted traditional methods of marketing their foodstuff. These are the factors that sustain employment and livelihood in food trade for a growing number of women in Accra.

\textbf{4.1.3 Impact on Trading in the Major Markets}

The number of traders operating in the market should impact trading activities in these markets. Among other things, it should lead to an increased level of competition in the markets, with implications for prices that customers pay for food and the profit margins of traders. Also, the lack of adequate trading spaces in the markets in the wake of the rising number of traders should have implications on availability of spaces for trading.

\textsuperscript{49} See for example, the studies contained in House-Midamba and Ekechi (1995); Clark (1994); Owusu and Lund (2004); Porter et. al. (2007)

\textsuperscript{50} Start up capital could easily be extended from a network of actors in the marketing system, including wholesalers, suppliers, transporters, or relatives. Traders could also retail foodstuff on a credit basis from their suppliers.
Despite these conditions, for the traders everyday in the market was ‘business as usual.’ Information gathered on this topic indicates the traders do not feel threatened by new entrants into the market. When asked how their increasing numbers were affecting their daily trade, one of the participants responded:

“it does not really matter. We are all here to conduct our business ... We all have our customers, so whether we have 10 traders or 100 traders, your customers will always come to you. If you treat them well, they will bring you more customers so it all depends on the relationship between you and your customers”.
(focus group discussion, Madina)

There was, however, some level of competition to attract new customers, especially for the small-scale traders, as expressed by this participant:

“sometimes we compete for the new customers. A lot of new people come to purchase food in the market everyday, and so you have to try and get more customers as best as you can. But because we are so many, we end up rushing onto the customers to sell our foodstuffs to them...so there is no problem with our regular customers. The problem is getting new customers...this has slowed because we are now so many”.
(focus group discussion, Achimota)

The impact in this area, therefore, fell heavily on the small-scale traders. These are the traders who most likely new to the market and are yet to command a loyal customer base. These traders employed a number of tactics, including vending in multiple locations both within and outside the market site and selling their food at slightly reduced prices in order to attract and retain customers. The well-established traders already capture a dominant share of the market for their produce. They had a network of retailers from the markets and loyal customers from the communities which assured that their produce always sold at a faster rate. Also, this group of traders directly controlled the flow of commodities in the market, and was very often the supply source for small-
scale traders. Consequently, any competition that existed in the market occurred below their scope of operation and had only a minor impact on their trading activities.

The conversations also show how the importance of trust and customer loyalty in everyday transactions at the market. Traders and their customers develop some kind of ‘working relationship’ which can also be described as friendship. These relationships are built on the trustworthiness of traders and the loyalty of customers, and are premised on utilizing social relations in economic transactions. Lyon (2000) describes similar relationships among farmers, traders, and agricultural input suppliers and the centrality of trust in the financing and marketing of tomatoes in Brong Ahafo, Ghana. For most new traders, the main concern was attracting new customers and keeping them in order to build a network of dependable clients.

4.2 Tales of Survival: Staying in Business at the Market

This section focuses on information gathered through in-depth personal interviews conducted with traders in all three markets. The objective is to examine the unique challenges faced by traders in the markets, and the strategies they adopt to stay in business. Although a wide variety of traders were interviewed, the section highlights the condition of the small-scale traders and relatively new entrants into the markets (as against the relatively older and more established traders in the markets). This emphasis is considered more insightful for a number of reasons. First, this group of traders is the fastest growing group and hence possesses the greatest potential in shaping the future direction of food marketing and access to food in the city. Second, traders within this group face more challenges and are considered more vulnerable to the likelihood of losing their investments and being forced out of business. Such a situation could create a
void in the city’s food marketing system. Lastly, the customer base of this group tends to be more household-based, compared to the market- and institution-based clientele of the wholesale group.

A case study approach is pursued to explore the issues because, it provides an excellent opportunity to examine whether conditions are unique to particular types of markets (size with regards to this study) or are more of a generic nature. Also, the collective of individual stories from the ground up is more focused and presents a clearer picture of the challenges market traders face on a daily basis. Consequently, it will contribute to more targeted solutions that are framed in light of the problems and lead to improved outcomes for the traders and better access to markets within the city. Solutions will be better tailored to tackle the problems of food marketing in the city if traders are actively engaged in this process and the problems they face are well articulated.

### 4.2.1 Case Study I: Agbogbloshie Market

Being one of the largest markets in the city, Agbogbloshie market offers many unique opportunities to market traders. The sheer size and volume of trade that passes through this market offer certain advantages to these traders, for example, access to a readily available market, relatively cheaper wholesale prices, better marketing infrastructure, and a more stable marketing environment. The ability of small-scale traders to take advantage of these opportunities is, however, constrained by the many challenges they face. Traders situated at the lower ranks of the market hierarchy tend to be marginalized and have their concerns and needs shelved as those of the large-scale traders take priority.
There are many notable (and obvious) differences between the various types of traders in this market. The first major difference was the variety of goods sold by the traders. The small-scale traders vended a greater variety of foodstuffs, usually a combination of locally produced and imported, processed and semi-processed food, while the large-scale traders specialized in just one product. Secondly, as pointed out earlier, the large-scale traders relied on a supply of food from the producing areas, whereas the small-scale traders sourced their food from within the market. The other distinguishing factors were the location of the trader within the market and the type of stall they occupied. These factors are very important as they influence the ability of the trader to attract customers.

The narratives below describe some of the challenges the traders expressed during the interviews:

“Credit problems! People buy the food and they don’t pay for it. So I give it to them on credit. By the time they pay off the debt whatever profit you would have made will have been lost. Because of that I cannot always restock my wares. If business was good, people will not have to buy food on credit, and then I don’t have to waste my time collecting money from people. But if you don’t sell on credit too, you don’t get customers, so it’s a risk but sometimes we have no choice”.
(trader 3, Agbogbloshie)

“Sometimes we run at a loss. That is the nature of the business. Sometimes people buy and say they will pay later but they don’t. And when you go to collect your debt they give you all kinds of excuses ... Life in this business is like from hand to mouth ... Your profit is so little that it goes back into the business. You can’t use it for personal things”.
(trader 4, Agbogbloshie)

“The main problem for me is getting a proper stall to sell my foodstuff. With my current place when it rains, I’m in big trouble, but the stalls are too costly so I cannot afford it... Even if I am able to buy one eventually I have to worry about
paying the daily susu\textsuperscript{51}. If I consider the way the sales are going now, I don’t think I can make any profit after buying the stall and paying all the dues”.

(trader 9, Agbogbloshie)

“Sometimes, when I bring the food here, I’m not able to sell it all. So it becomes a burden and eventually a loss. We do not have any storage facilities for our perishable food items, so we have to hope that the customers will come, and that we can sell it all. And so my food goes bad all the time ... So I just have to drastically reduce the price just to sell it off”.

(trader 16, Agbogbloshie)

“The nature of the business has changed. A few years back, we could deal directly with the middlemen who brought the food from the hinterland and bargain with them for lower prices. If there was any commission, we had a say in determining what it was. Now we cannot do that. The big women buy all the food from the hinterland and then we have to buy from them at whatever price they give us. We do not have any bargaining power at all, so we now have to pay more for the same quantity of foodstuff. This reduces our profits”.

(trader 17, Agbogbloshie)

“These days the market is not good. Since they started with the reconstruction and reallocation, we don’t have permanent spots so all our customers have gone away, because they cannot locate us. To add to this problem, we have markets springing up everywhere so a lot of people don’t see the need to come here to purchase their food”.

(trader 18, Agbogbloshie)

“The fees and levies are too much. Today we have to contribute for this. Tomorrow it is another contribution for that. We also pay our daily susu... whenever I see the susu man coming my heart begins to pound. The simple reason is that business is not going well for me. The monies we pay is for our own benefit here, but when you do not even make enough profit to cover your investment, these levies can become unbearable”.

(trader 20, Agbogbloshie)

These narratives highlight the general sense of disenchantment expressed by most interview participants. These traders envisaged trading in food as a way out of

\textsuperscript{51} Susu refers to savings scheme that allows members to make contributions into a central fund that they can access later when they need a lump sum. There are different forms of susu, but the most popular form practiced in the markets is one in which members agree to contribute daily to the fund, which is given to each member in rotation. Members usually pay a small fee. Susu in increasingly being recognized as a source of finance to a group of people who otherwise have very limited or no access to credit (see Alabi et. al., 2007; Bortei-Doku Aryeetey and Aryeetey, 1996)
unemployment and gaining an income, but most had limited success in achieving the financial independence that accompanies gainful employment. These conditions are further entrenched by the hierarchical nature of players in this market that limits the ability of some traders to effectively negotiate better outcomes for themselves. Given their limited bargaining position in relation to other traders in the market, some of the interview participants were of the view that their welfare in the market will only deteriorate with time. The narratives also suggest that the constraints faced by the traders threaten their continued stay in the market. As one of the trader noted;

‘what is the benefit of being in this business if you can’t make ends meet? Your profit margin is barely enough to support your operation at this scale, and so, how can you even think of expanding your trade?’
(trader 15, Agbogbloshie)

Considering the challenges described by the traders, the interviews sought to uncover why they still remained in the trade. The statements below mirror the general trend in the responses to this issue for all the traders interviewed:

“How can I survive in the city? What else can I do? There is no work anywhere ... I do not have any skills... and I am not alone... A lot of us here do not have any [formal] education that will get us a better job. Even if I learn another skill, for example, if I learn hairdressing, I can’t afford to pay the apprenticeship fee ... And then after the training, I have to work for the “madam” for a period of time. And so even though this business is not going well for me, I will manage it”.
(trader 4, Agbogbloshie)

“These kinds of problems are happening everywhere. Everybody is suffering so I don’t expect that if I leave this place, I will be better off elsewhere. It is true that things could have been better... if our leaders paid more attention to our concerns... and if we had a louder voice here at the market, but maybe things will change soon”.
(trader 17, Agbogbloshie)

These types of responses indicate that there was recognition by the traders that conditions were not better ‘out there’. Even those traders who expressed their desire to
leave the trade if they found jobs elsewhere acknowledged that this was not likely to happen in the short term. To stay in business, one had to adapt to conditions at the market by constantly reworking the landscape and responding to the challenges as they arise. As one of the traders put it, “you have to look at where the market is going and follow it” (trader 4, Agbogbloshie). Surviving in the business also depended on developing strategies to retain old customers and attract new ones. As well, maintaining solidarity with other traders in similar positions within the market was crucial. Some of the challenges faced by the traders and the strategies they have adopted to respond to these challenges are outlined in the table 4.1 below.
Table 4:1 - Traders’ Challenges and Strategies, Agbogbloshie Market

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Strategy embedded in the narrative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining customer base and loyalty</td>
<td>“It’s tough but we are managing … What I do is to sell different products. I always watch out for foods that sell fast, and then I concentrate on those ones. The only problem is that if my customers come tomorrow and I’m selling a different product, they will be disappointed … but I also have to think of myself. Sometimes what I do is this: if my customer wants smoked fish and I don’t have it this time, I quickly get it from one of my fellow traders here for her. That way, she will always come to me, and if I pick up selling fish again, I’ll still maintain my customers”. “I think it is very important to look out for one another. Because we were relocated, a lot of us lost our customers. But we all know our customers and the customers of our fellow traders. So if it happens that my friend’s customer comes to me, and I know where she is sitting now, I will direct the customer to her. That way she will also bring my old customers to me. If the customer decides that she wants to stay with me, that is fine… but I will not steal other people’s customers”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing daily sales</td>
<td>“I target the office workers especially, usually around sunset. This is the time when they are going home and then they want to buy some foodstuff for the household … I let my assistant take the food to the streets and the lorry station. That way, we get a better price because people are in a hurry to buy and go home, and they don’t have time to bargain too much … On most days, I make more sales during this timeframe than I make the whole day”. “You are lucky that you found me here! I am here today. Tomorrow I may be in another place within this market. If I realize that trading is slow in this area, I move to another place. I have my base alright, but I move around and set up in different spots in order to increase my sales. This market is very big so you can always find some ‘small place’ to display your food items”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring a continuous stock of foodstuff</td>
<td>“I stick to one supplier for each of the foodstuff that I sell. That way, I build a better relationship with her, and it pays off. It is possible to get a better price from another supplier, but if I always change my supplier, looking for a better price, I may get a good deal today but in the long run it will go against me. Because I have one constant supplier for each foodstuff that I sell here, they all know me well so when times are hard I can get the foodstuff on credit and then pay back when I finish selling. Also, their payment terms are very reasonable since we have a working relationship”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Interview, Accra
The strategies contained in the narratives stress the importance of relationship building with customers and fellow traders, and a more aggressive approach to selling. While these strategies are not necessarily new (see for example Clark, 1994), they have become vital to the trade, and are changing the way the market has functioned traditionally. It is significant to note that the new way of doing business, particularly for the relatively new traders has contributed to the outward, sprawl-like, outward looking marketing environment, with a lot of trading occurring outside the official boundaries of the market as traders take their wares out to customers on the street.

When asked what kinds of changes they would like to see at the market, the traders mentioned improving conditions that will increase their bargaining power and position them to better negotiate with the other players in the market. It is worthy of note that while most policymakers view food marketing problems in terms of weakening infrastructure, improving market infrastructure did not come up in any of the interviews. When prompted, one trader commented that improving market infrastructure without any improvement in their position within the market hierarchy would marginalize them even further within the system. Another suggested that when traders’ conditions have improved, they would be in a better situation to support the AMA’s effort in improving the market infrastructure. These observations are important because they reveal that while market renovation and relocation are regarded by the authorities as a means of improving the food marketing within the city the traders regard these as contributing to the difficulties they encounter in securing their livelihoods. This disjunction further illustrates the lack of engagement between the city’s administration and its teeming traders.
4.2.2 Case Study II: Madina Market

The situation at Madina market was not significantly different from the picture at Agbogbloshie market. This market appeared more organized and orderly with less human traffic compared to Agbogbloshie, but it also looked more compact and constricted for trading space. It soon became apparent that adequate space for their activities was a major problem facing some traders in this market, as this issue came up in several interviews. According to one trader,

“This place is too small for all of us. (The government) does not seem to realize that Madina market is no longer the small market it used to be, and has failed to give us more land for expansion ... The volume of trade here is just like that in Makola or Agbogbloshie or Kokomba market, we have less space”.
(trader 4, Madina)

“The stalls are too small... just look at the space we have here... what can you do here? If my business grows and I want to expand where can I go? We do not even have enough space to store all our food. When suppliers bring the food and the price is reasonable, we cannot buy too much because you will not even have a place to store it and that becomes another problem. So you can only buy small quantities at a time. This affects our trade because when the price goes down, you buy a lot so you can increase your profit. But if you follow this logic, you will end up with a loss because all the food will rot”.
(trader 16, Madina)

There was also a perception of lack of accountability and ineffective leadership in enforcing marketing regulations and allocating space among some of the traders. Of all the three markets, concerns regarding leadership were most apparent in this market. The statements below describe some of the sentiments expressed in this regard:

“As for this market, everything is ‘who you know’.52 When they were reallocating the stalls, we all paid for it, expecting that everyone will have their stall. What happened eventually...? Some of us do not have a stall, and others have two, even three stalls. We were told to wait for ours... do they expect us to sit at home while

52 The term ‘who you know’ is often used to refer to situations where nepotism or favouritism appears to influence the allocation of resources or access to opportunity.
we wait? I had to incur extra cost to purchase this kiosk, and the space I am occupancy now is not mine. Today they will tell me to move here or there.”
(trader 11, Madina)

“Our leaders here are just here for the position, and not for the market’s welfare. Some traders flout the rules here with impunity... they can do whatever they like and no one holds them accountable. Yet if I should break even the smallest rule here, I will be summoned. The rules only work for some people”.
(trader 2, Madina)

“We keep paying money everyday for different things, yet we do not see the results. And when you ask, no one gives you any proper answers. We have been contributing 5000 cedis a month for security... meanwhile theft is a very big problem here... things go missing everyday. What is the use of the security”?
(trader 4, Madina)

“If you have a market that is getting bigger everyday, and the leaders don’t know how to run the place, people will get fed up and take the law into their own hands. We are all responsible for sanitation, and we pay for it, but look at the mess here... because when people dispose off their garbage indiscriminately, there’s no penalty for it”.
(trader 13, Madina)

“We pay too much for everything, and yet we have to cater for everything ourselves. We pay for this, and for that, but no one does anything for us. We do not know what our money is used for. Some traders think the money we pay is ok... well, if your business is big, what you have to pay is like a drop in the bucket. But if you are struggling to make even your daily sales, all these payments affect you”.
(trader 19, Madina)

Concerns such as these resonate throughout the interviews, and this shows the extent to which perceptions of nepotism, lack of accountability, and inaction on the part of the market leaders are widespread among a group of traders. These concerns are serious when viewed in light of the crucial role market leaders play in the effective administration of the markets, as alluded to previously. When the market leadership is  

---

53 To gain the market leadership perspective on this issue, it was brought up in a conversation with an executive of the Madina market traders’ association. She complained that traders in this market were very uncooperative and difficult to work with. She also contended that the dues they collect were not significantly more that what was paid in other markets, and that this market was one of the most effectively run markets in Accra because of their prudent management.
perceived as weak or favouring some traders against others, the seeds of discontent that ensue among the aggrieved traders will most likely disintegrate the internal cohesion among traders in this market. Apart from the impact on daily activities, these problems have an impact on traders’ morale as well as their involvement in decision-making and participation in voluntary activities within the market. The interviews indicate that apathy was gradually creeping into the market as some of the traders felt they were not actively engaged:

“At first, I used to be actively involved in this market. I attended every meeting and never missed a clean-up exercise. These days, I don’t even attend the meetings—what’s the point? No one listens to us. It’s just a waste of time. As for cleaning, I cannot opt out because it is everyone’s responsibility to keep the market clean, for our own health. Even then, I do not do it wholeheartedly, because it feels like some of us are doing the work for others to benefit”.
(trader 1, Madina)

“This market belongs to some traders, not all of us. At the meeting, only certain people can talk, and even when you try to raise an issue, it is completely ignored, because it does not affect the important people. What goes on there is just like ‘concert party’ (comedy show), like school children who do not know what they are about”.
(trader 6, Madina)

“Why should I even bother to go for meetings? These meetings do not improve our lot in any way. They are just the medium through which they tell us of the next thing we’ll be paying for”.
(trader 9, Madina)

“It is sad that some people decide not to participate in welfare meetings anymore. I have noticed a big difference in the zeal and energy that people brought into these meetings. Even when people come to meetings they do not contribute to the discussion, so we do not get a balanced opinion. Also, in the past whenever there was a clean-up, everyone showed up. There was no need for any penalty. But now, people just show up because they have to and complain afterwards. Our leaders need to pay attention to this issue because it is breaking us up ... We no longer speak with one voice”.
(trader 10, Madina)
Considering the importance of voluntary activities of traders in the daily operation and up-keep of the market, especially in the areas of sanitation, apathy adversely affects conditions in the market and trading activities. Also, if traders lose confidence in their leadership, it jeopardizes the relationship between the city authorities and the traders, as the market leadership provides this crucial link between the market and the city administration. Ultimately, this affects trading conditions at the market and its access by the communities that depend on this market for their food needs.

In addition to the problems discussed above, the scenario at Madina market presents a very important dimension to the food situation in the city. This market is located just outside the administrative boundary of the city, within an area that is undergoing intense sprawl, and it serves a rapidly increasing and diverse population on the city’s outskirts. Consequently, this market has seen a dramatic increase in its customer base in recent years. The market is, however, still regarded as a ‘small’ market from an administrative perspective, and its infrastructure has not been improved to meet the needs of its growing patronage. The burden of the market’s growth has therefore fallen mainly on the traders in the market. The physical growth and expansion of the market has been led largely by the market leaders and some influential traders, and this has left other traders in the market feeling marginalized in the process.

Unlike Agbogbloshie market where the most visible expression of difference or tension was between wholesalers and small-scale traders, the tension at Madina market was most notable between the market leadership and traders. While traders viewed their leadership as weak and self-serving, the leaders described the traders as uncooperative and not interested in the welfare of the market and its growing clientele. This tension
notwithstanding, the leaders still enjoy considerable respect from the traders, which enables them to manage the affairs of the market.

4.2.3 Case Study III: Achimota Market

Achimota market presents a picture of a very small and community-based market, serving the needs of people living within Achimota and its environs. There is a closer connection between the traders and customers, partly due to the fact that the traders live within the community. The kinds of tensions and power play that were observed within Agbogbloshie and Madina markets were not so prominent in this market, and the atmosphere was generally more relaxed. Also, the prominent distinction between traders in terms of scale of operation that marked the landscapes of Agbogbloshie and Madina markets appeared to be non-existent here. The stalls occupied by food traders were roughly all of almost the same size. The obvious distinction between traders in this market was the difference in the space occupied by traders in consumer products and to some extent traders in imported food - who occupied concrete stores and shops that enclosed the wooden stalls of the food traders.

A very important feature of this market was the reliance on family members to assist in trading. Out of the twenty traders interviewed, six were managing the stall for their mothers on the day of the interview. One such responded said that,

“I only come here when my mother cannot make it … today for instance, she had to attend a funeral and we cannot just close the shop so I had to come in so we do not lose the day’s sales”.
(trader 3, Achimota)

Another one noted that,

“this is my mother’s stall… I help her here on most days. Sometimes she needs
an extra hand to assist her when it gets busy here, or if she has other errands to run... why should she hire someone else and pay that person while I can help her for free? After all it is like a family business so that is how we cut down cost.
(trader 14, Achimota)

It should be noted that although these kinds of family arrangements were not uncommon at the other two markets surveyed, it was not as widespread as it was in this market. At Agbogbloshie for example, it was more common to engage the services of paid assistants. It is possible that the close proximity of traders’ homes to the market is a contributing factor to this practice at Achimota market. Relying on family members also reduces the cost of food retailing for the traders, since it does not involve payments for the service rendered.

For traders in this market, the key concern was the slow pace at which they sold their food items, as expressed below:

“These days the market is not good at all. You will sit here from morning to evening and yet sell only small quantities of food. It is not that people don’t come here. We get a lot of people in this market now, compared to the past. The problem is when people ask of the price of foodstuff and you tell them, they just walk away, complaining that it’s too high. They can’t buy. But we also can’t reduce the price because our profit margin is just small,... any further reduction and you are making a loss”.
(trader 5, Achimota)

“The biggest problem I face in this market is that people are always comparing the prices here to prices in Malata or Agbogbloshie... when I say these fingers of plantains cost 20,000 cedis, they will tell me that they can get the same quantity for maybe 10,000 or 12,000 cedis at Makola. But that is not fair. They forget that I incur more costs than the trader at Malata or Makola, because I have to add my transportation costs to the price if I have to make a profit”.
(trader 11, Achimota)

“The market is not good, because the food does not go fast. Nobody buys our food in bulk anymore, because food costs are rising. You can’t blame the customers because you do not know the situation in anybody’s pocket... you can only buy what you can afford. These hardships are not with the market alone. Conditions have become difficult everywhere so we are all feeling it”.
(trader 12, Achimota)
“This business is causing me a lot of headache. I think too much because I can’t sell my foodstuff as fast as I should. What will I do with all this food if I can’t sell them? It’s too much trouble. Everyday when I wake up my first thought is ‘will today be better’?”
(trader 16, Achimota)

These expressions were not limited to this market, but were a general concern expressed in all three markets, reflecting the upward rise of the cost of living in the city. At Achimota market, the traders were under a lot of pressure to match their food prices with prices in other markets, especially by people who purchased food in the city centre as well. The traders contended that their counterparts in the bigger markets had lots of support services which they lacked, and a wider catchment area for their market. The following statements illustrate how some of the traders dealt with this problem:

If I can sell this basket of tomatoes for 10,000 cedis, I will price it at 15,000, so that if the customer bargains really hard, I let it go for about 11,000 cedis or so. So the customer leaves happy that they got a good deal and I also make a little profit. But if I should price it at 11,000 cedis and say the price is firm, they will still bargain, and it will definitely go beyond 10,000 cedis so I will lose.
(trader 5, Achimota)

If anyone complains that my food is too costly and wants me to reduce the price, I tell him/her to go to Accra if they think the food is any cheaper. I tell them to think of the cost of going to Accra to shop, just the cost, forget about the hassle and the time, and then they will realize that when you do your calculations carefully, our food is even cheaper here than in Accra.
(trader 9, Achimota)

If you treat your customer with respect, and take your time to explain why the food costs so much, they will understand. You need to have patience with your customers. This is a very small market, but it is growing very fast... because the town is expanding. So people will continue to buy their food here. People will not travel to Accra just to buy a bottle of oil or a few fingers of plantain or a tuber of yam ... if you have patience to explain the situation to your customers and you are nice to them, they will continue to come to you. That is how I keep the few customers that I have.
(trader 12, Achimota)
The other type of problem that was highlighted during the interviews here was related to the lack of infrastructure and services to support trading activities in the market. Since the bulk of food in this market was brought in from middlemen and in a few cases farmers from the rural areas, the traders were concerned that the lack of infrastructure and amenities in the market limited the number of people who brought their wares here. The narrative below describes one participant’s account of this problem:

“One big problem is that this market is small, so we do not have a lot of infrastructure. The biggest problem is somewhere to sleep. When the traders from the hinterland come here they complain that they do not have a place to sleep so they will go to Malata because there they have a place to sleep. So a lot of the farmers do not like coming here. There are also problems with safety… a short while ago someone was robbed of her two million cedis… do you think she will come here again? If because of these problems we have only a limited number of people coming to retail their wares for us they have the freedom to sell the food for us at any price they want. So if you buy at a high price your price will also be high”.
(trader 10, Achimota)

The concern with number of middlemen and farmers willing to trade in the market was a very important issue for this market, as only five out of 20 traders interviewed went to the central markets in Accra for their foodstuffs. In addition, it contributed to relatively uniform and stable food prices in this market, unlike the situation in Agbobloshie where the large-scale traders and produce queens played a huge role in the supply of food into the market and hence food prices.

The kinds of credit arrangements between traders and their suppliers found in Agbobloshie and Madina markets existed in this market as well. However, it appears that there was a lot a flexibility in terms of payment here, compared to the situation at Agbobloshie. Some traders paid off their goods at the time of the transaction, but others purchased on credit, with an arrangement to pay off the supplier when he/she returned to
the market with the next consignment of food. As one trader put it,

“even though I know I have pay for the goods, it’s not like in Makola where the wholesaler is constantly at your back demanding her money. I don’t have the stress of running into her around the corner and giving her an excuse… God willing, by the time my supplier comes with more goods, I am able to pay her off. Also, they are very reasonable. If for some reason I have not finished selling the initial consignment, she can give me more time to pay. You will not find this in the other markets”.
(trader 19, Achimota)

Being a small market, the kinds of problems that were typical of the larger markets in the city, particularly with respect to the relationship between the diverse groups of traders did not appear to be a major problem for this market. Traders here were more concerned with facilitates that will make the market attractive to suppliers from the hinterland, improved sanitation, and leveraging food prices vis-à-vis prices in the larger markets. In the words of a trader,

“we only want to ensure that we have regular supply, at a cost that we can afford, and also that people can buy. If the price is low for customers to buy, we will not have a lot of these problems. But if the prices are high and people cannot buy, we also suffer because our food rots and we run at a loss”!
(trader 11, Achimota)

However, considering the rate at which both the market and the area it serves are growing, it is very likely that traders here and their customers will face more complex problems in the near future than those mentioned in the narratives. This market’s location in a sprawling suburb of Accra that is rapidly expanding spatially will also increase the size of the population that depends on it, a scenario that will soon mirror the situation at Madina. Thus its ability to cater for the additional population in the surrounding areas is crucial. Also, as the market space expands and more traders join in, the types of mechanisms that have sustained the cordial atmosphere for traders and relationships between different stakeholders here will be altered. In addition to these
concerns, Achimota market is located in an area that is undergoing extensive redevelopment as part of Accra’s redevelopment program. The space adjacent to the market is being developed into a major inter-regional transportation hub between Accra and the rest of the country. This development will certainly have a huge impact on this market and its traders, and change its role as a neighbourhood-level market serving the food needs of a local community. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 below show a layout of Madina and Achimota markets sketched from the field.

Figure 4.1- Layout of Achimota Market

Source: Sketched from the field, 2004
4.3 **Voices of Discontent: Lessons From the Markets**

The views gathered from the interviews and focus groups depict the ways in which changes within the market affect different groups of traders. The personal interviews in particular emphasize traders’ capacity for change through the types of strategies they enact to enable to them respond to the pressures of the marketplace, and to
seek new opportunities for themselves. Although it is clear that the city’s spatial and demographic transformation presents opportunities to enhance one’s trade, not all traders are positioned to benefit from these changes. In most cases the benefits accrue to the established elements within the market, while for most traders these changes have led to a quandary. The contrasting voices on change were most evident in the focus groups, which included participants representing different groups of traders.

Certain themes dominate the narratives in all three markets, and this again emphasized that the situation in the various markets is a reflection of the broader transformations within the city. Three dominant themes that were reiterated in the discussions were the lack of financial and infrastructural support for traders, market levies and fees, and the rising cost of food. These three issues, brought up at different times during the conversations, are undoubtedly inter-linked, and understanding this linkage, or lack of it, may help explain some of the frustration traders expressed about their situation. As the interviews indicate, the traders felt that the level of taxes they pay to the city authorities outweighed the level of support they received in improving conditions at the market. In addition to their tolls and levies, they paid association fees, which went into financing developments that they consider as the city authority’s responsibility. The mounting cost of trading was considered an important factor in the rising cost of food. The important factor in determining the cost of trading, and eventually the cost of most locally food was the cost of transportation. The traders blamed transport operators for charging exorbitant fares to cart food into the market (especially from the hinterland), while the transport owners pointed to the rising cost of fuel to justify their fares.
The narratives from the personal interviews also highlight certain themes that were peculiar to each market. At Agbogbloshie market, conversations suggest that because of the size of the market and number of traders conducting business here, there was intense competition among traders for customers and space. The affected traders have responded to this challenge by adopting a more aggressive approach to trading their foodstuff. Traders are more likely to leave their stalls and display their food in the market’s alleys and along the street, bringing them into direct confrontation with city officials. At Madina, the themes that emerge emphasize inadequate space for trading and problems with the market leadership such as nepotism, self-centredness, and weak enforcement. These problems have led to apathy and lack of participation of traders in decision-making at this market. Traders at Achimota market faced the challenge of customers comparing food prices here to those in the bigger markets.

Perhaps the greatest resource at the traders’ disposal is their ability to organize themselves and the arrangements they have developed to support each other. The most poignant example of these mechanisms includes the credit arrangements that allow traders to source their foodstuff and pay off at a later date, when they have sold the food. Traders only pay a moderate interest to the wholesaler, and some traders recounted instances when they did not have to pay any interest. Another example is the cordial relationship that traders forge with their customers that allow them to retain a loyal customer base. The benefits of these arrangements extend beyond the marketplace into the city’s households by ensuring that traders remain in the business of selling food, and residents have a ready supply of food available, that is, if they can afford it.
4.4 Active Players or Passive Victims: Examining the Role of Traders in Food Marketing in Accra

The discussion in this chapter has painted a picture of an increasing number of traders who enter the food trade sector as a way of finding employment and income in the urban economy. It is easy to assume that these activities have only a marginal impact on food security in the city and household access. On the contrary, it can be argued that the food situation in Accra is a reflection of individual initiatives on the part of these food traders, who are mostly women. While many traders engage in the trade because of limited employment prospects in other sectors of the urban economy, their activities keep food flowing into the city’s markets and ultimately into its neighbourhoods and households.

Food supply into the city, and its distribution within the city, is organized principally around the activities of the traders. The marketing channels that exist within the formally established markets and the informal (and illegal from the city authorities’ point of view) markets function in a seamless fashion to provide urban residents with a variety of food items, both locally produced and imported. This scenario can be attributed to the procurement and management roles that the different groups of food traders play within the food marketing system.

The large-scale traders for example, have a direct influence on the flow of food into the city. Their activities involve a network of food producers, import brokers, transport operators, mostly under their control, and these ensure that the food gets into the city from the rural hinterland or from the port through the retail chain. During the field survey, it was observed that most market queens were directly involved with food producers and often undertook the trip to the hinterland on their own, rather than relying
on “middlemen”. In a few cases, the trips and negotiations were entrusted into the care of trusted relatives who were also directly involved in the food trade. This level of control also allowed the traders to heavily influence the price of food items at the markets. Interviews conducted at Madina and Achimota markets point to the fact that some traders in the retail and neighbourhood level markets also have their own networks in the farming areas and source their produce from these areas. However, some of the traders interviewed indicated that they relied on the large wholesale markets in the city centre as the sole source of food which they trade in their markets. The market leadership also performs crucial administrative and management roles in the market by organizing the traders in associations, collecting tolls on behalf of the AMA, and ensuring the day-to-day operation of the markets. Through such activities, these traders fill the void left by the city authorities due to the lack of planning for the urban food system.

The inability of city authorities to set a policy agenda for the city’s food system as discussed in the previous chapter implies that food traders will become increasingly important in determining food availability within the city. The role that food traders play in the city’s food distribution system should be properly understood in light of the changing nature of the dynamic mix of traders and the differentiation and stratification between and within groups of traders. As has been described earlier, the surge in numbers of food traders, predominantly women, is in response to the economic crisis facing the country and declining employment prospects in other sectors. The emerging mass of traders enter the trade do so because that appears to be the easiest path to survival in the urban job market. This group of traders does not have the economic and political clout to significantly influence conditions at the markets. Rather, it is the older
established wholesale traders, and in most cases the market queens and produce queens whose activities largely influence the flow of food into the markets and commodity prices. This group of traders is the primary driver behind the city’s food supply and distribution system, and their influence often extends beyond the central markets to the small retail markets because of their networks of retailers in these small markets.

Small-scale, petty traders and other food vendors, however, do play a crucial role in bringing food into the otherwise poorly serviced parts of the city. It is these groups who are influential in making food available in those neighbourhoods whose residents cannot make routine trips to the larger wholesale markets to purchase food for their households. Also, these traders offer more variety in the neighbourhood level markets than in the wholesale markets. These groups of traders are also the most vulnerable. As information presented earlier shows, these traders are more likely to quit their trade should they find employment in other sectors of the informal economy. The survival of these traders depends largely on the support systems that they have devised within the markets. As Lyon (2003) points out, the flexible and fluid nature of these support systems and informal arrangements have contributed to their success and allowed traders to participate in a very high risk business with limited access to financial capital.

Unlike other forms of informal enterprises, programs to assist small scale traders are very rare, and even when they exist, they tend to be built on some form of “partnership” between the AMA and the traders, with the traders performing the AMA’s functions at the market. Examples of these include partnerships to promote better sanitation, improve revenue collection, and other kinds of self-help services that should have been provided by the AMA.
The shifting dynamics, and the differentiation and stratification within traders require attention if the role market traders play in food provisioning within the city should be enhanced. Improving access to markets and food requires more than fixing marketing infrastructure. It requires engaging the different groups of traders in their setting to understand how they operate and the challenges they face. This will pave the way to creating conditions that will improve the working conditions of the growing mass on traders and supporting the role they play in the city’s food marketing system.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented traders’ perspectives on food marketing issues in Accra, and has highlighted the importance of paying close attention to the traders’ voices, albeit with different priorities, in improving food security in the city. The discussion has emphasized that the changing social and economic milieu in the city has contributed in some ways to food availability, but has also created unmet needs and challenges especially for the traders. This has resulted in the traders reworking the market landscape through different strategies within and across markets in the city. The survival strategies facilitate the maintenance of livelihoods for the traders, but more significantly facilitate food acquisition and consumption for households in Accra. Many questions about impacts of trading on the traders, their customers, and the city as a whole still remain to be uncovered.

In the next chapter, I examine the food acquisition and consumption patterns of households in the city. The chapter discusses how the changing nature of food marketing described in this chapter is related to household dynamics and decisions about what to eat.
and where to purchase food. Variations within households in the city’s different neighbourhoods are taken into consideration to determine the extent to which these influence food acquisition and consumption patterns.
CHAPTER FIVE
BRINGING FOOD HOME: CASE STUDIES ON HOUSEHOLD FOOD ACQUISITION STRATEGIES IN ACCRA

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the discussion turns to an examination of how individual households interact with markets in the city in order to satisfy their food needs. The nature of this interaction is a function of factors such as household composition, income sources, location, food prices, and socio-cultural factors like food habits, taboos, tastes, and preferences. The chapter focuses on food sources and consumption patterns within the various types of households in the city. It considers how structural factors such as the social and demographic features of households, gender dynamics, decision-making processes, sources of income, and place of residence on one hand, and the changes within the marketplace described in the previous chapter affect the availability of food in a household.

The chapter employs data gathered through customer surveys in the three markets and household surveys in the six neighbourhoods selected for this study. The customer surveys in the markets uncover the extent to which the city’s food markets satisfy the food needs of their customers. The household surveys paint a picture of how households engage with food markets and other food outlets in the city in bringing food home, and depict what is happening to the central role of food markets in the provision of food to households in the city. These observations provide essential deepening of our understanding of the broad patterns of food acquisition on the bases of the type of food purchased, and where this food is purchased. They also enable us to draw the linkages
between the changes occurring within the marketplace and household food acquisition strategies and consumption patterns.

The first section of the chapter sets the stage by describing the relative importance of different sources of food to the household food basket, and also firmly establishes the primacy of purchased food relative to other sources of food. The second section focuses on the surveys and examines the reliability of food markets and household food acquisition sources. This section is followed by a consideration of emerging trends in food acquisition across the city’s neighbourhoods and their implications for access to food and food consumption. The final section offers some thoughts on the improving household interaction with food outlets in the city

5.1 Household Food Sources and Consumption Patterns in Accra

Before discussing how differently positioned households interact with food markets in the city, it is necessary to address the fundamental question of how households in Accra meet their basic requirements for food. Addressing this question uncovers how changes in conditions at the market and household affect the availability of food in the household. Also, it provides insight into food consumption trends, as this is merely a reflection of how people acquire food and what they consume. This section reiterates the central role of food markets as the primary source of food in most households in Accra as highlighted in the first part of this study (chapters 1 and 2). Other sources of food available to different households and their contribution to the household food basket are also considered.
Maxwell et. al’s (2000) extensive study on food and nutrition security in Accra provides valuable insights on food sources, expenditure, and consumption in the city. Using household expenditure patterns, they indicate the proportion of food acquired from five different sources for different categories of households (Table 5.1). Their analyses reveal that “food expenditure patterns in Accra are characterized by heavy dependence on purchased food commodities, including a substantial amount of street foods. For [their entire sample], these purchases accounted for approximately 90 per cent of total consumption, indicating a strong reliance on the market to meet consumption needs” (2000; 59).

Table 5.1- Proportion (%) of Household Food Acquired from Different Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Purchased food</th>
<th>Own production</th>
<th>In-kind wages</th>
<th>Gifts and transfers</th>
<th>Food given to others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entire Sample</td>
<td>90.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupation of household head</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agric/Fishing</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petty trader</td>
<td>89.8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Food Vendor</td>
<td>88.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>91.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled labour</td>
<td>92.4</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled labour</td>
<td>90.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>95.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified</td>
<td>92.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>86.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex of household head</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>92.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Maxwell et. al, 2000
As Table 5.1 shows, with the minor exception of households that depend on agriculture and fishing, there are no significant variations among the different categories of households. The second most important source of food is gifts and transfers, representing only about 6 per cent of food consumed for the entire sample.

The extensive reliance on markets for food means that the availability of food in a household, and subsequently its consumption is strongly related to food prices and sufficient incomes to purchase food (see also Randolph, 1997; Tinker, 1997). This scenario paints a very important picture of what is happening to access to food in the city. Those with lower incomes will experience the greatest barriers regarding access to food, given that other sources of food, especially gifts and transfers, and ‘own production’ do not contribute substantially to the household food basket. In fact, Maxwell et. al. (2000) observed in their study that the proportion of food from gifts and transfers was significantly higher for households in the higher income quintile. It is also important to note that even those households that engage in agriculture depend largely on market purchase for food. The analysis also indicates that urban agriculture does not contribute substantially to household food supply, as is the situation in other parts of Africa, particularly eastern Africa (see section 2.1.2). The results of the household surveys conducted for this study tell a similar story. Ninety-six per cent of the respondents indicated that the principal source of food for their household was purchased food. The remaining four per cent relied on other sources including food transfers from relatives, own cultivation, and other forms of assistance.

Information gathered during the household surveys also reveals that the types of food purchased from the market are becoming more diversified, given the rising number
of markets, supermarkets, fast-food locales, and street food outlets in the city. Import liberalization has led to an influx of imported semi-processed and processed foods in markets, adding to the local stock of foodstuff available for purchase. Also, there has been a surge in local food processing activity, which has flooded the market with a “westernized” version of some local foodstuffs— for example fufu powder, banku powder, and canned palm nuts. These types of food are less cumbersome and convenient to prepare compared to the traditional way of preparing them, and have therefore become very popular in the city.

It is important to note that supermarkets and department stores did not play an important role as a major source of purchased food in this study. Even though these have become visible elements of the urban landscape, their patronage pales in comparison to the more traditional markets. These supermarkets are found mainly in the wealthier parts of the city, and cater for small proportion of the urban population. The reasons provided for the low patronage of supermarkets was related to their limited range of food, comprising mostly of provisions (bottled and canned foods). Some residents expressed the notion that even though they could buy from the supermarkets they choose to buy at the market since buying at the supermarket meant going back to the market to buy those food items that are not available there. On the other hand, all the items carried by the supermarkets are available at the markets. Most participants, however, agreed that supermarkets offer safer and higher quality food, but for a higher price, compared to the

---

54 During a conversation with a supermarket owner, he explained that their sales volume has increased consistently over the last five years. According to him, their main clients were market retailers and a few households. It was also discovered that unit prices were slightly lower than the prices in the market, since the supermarkets were the primary distribution points for all the major imported semi-processed and processed food in the city. Some supermarkets also had their own outlets in the major markets.
food sold in the markets. These findings are similar to a study of global food retail chains in Madagascar, which found that supermarkets there cater for the food demand of a small middle class and will not likely increase their food retail share in poorer sections of the city (Minten, 2007).

The research also indicated that household food purchases are split between prepared, ready-to-eat food and unprepared food for all the types of households surveyed. Most households purchased a wide variety of cooked food from different vendors throughout the day. The penetration of western-style, fast food outlets, together with the proliferation of small-scale, informal ‘street food’ food enterprises (as discussed in chapter three) have contributed to the availability of food for urban residents. While ready-to-eat foods are consumed primarily for their convenience and cost, the high patronage of these types of food signify other socio-economic changes in the city. Drakakis-Smith (1997) for example argued that the growth in western-style fast food outlets is “inextricably intertwined with the cultural transformation of the urban populations in Third World cities” (811). This trend, however, is also fuelled by economic liberalization that has first, created the enabling environment for these enterprises, and second, led to the emergence of a new class of clientele with the income and preference for such fast foods. Solomon and Gross (1995) also point out that the use of fast food foods is further promoted by the dispersion of the family to various parts of the city during mealtime, making fast food outlets a convenient alternative.

There is, however, a significant difference in the proportion of household food that is purchased from fast food outlets and street food vendors among different types of households. While purchases of ready-to-eat foods accounted for about one-third of the
food budget for the entire sample, there was a marked income difference— it accounted for 39 per cent for low-income homes and about 25 per cent for high-income homes. As table 5.2 indicates, occupational groups that have the lowest incomes are those that spend a higher proportion of their food budget on meals prepared outside the home. These findings have a number of significant implications.

**Table 5.2- Proportion of Household Food Budget Spent on Meals Away From Home**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Proportion of Budget (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entire Sample</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupation of household head</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agric/Fishing</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petty trader</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street food vendor</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled labour</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled labour</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex of household head</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Maxwell et. al, 2000

First, low-income homes are more likely to purchase food on a daily basis. Since this food is purchased in small quantities, they are more likely to pay more for their food in the long run. In addition, members in low-income households will limit the number of meals they have in a day in order to minimize their food expenditure. They seek to maximize the quantity of food they can obtain with a given amount of money, and inadvertently pay no attention to the nutritious quality of the food. During the household surveys, some respondents indicated that the proportion of their household budgets that
goes towards food is steadily increasing. However, the quantity of food available at home has remained stable. Therefore even though they are spending more on food because of rising prices, they are not consuming increased quantities.

The information in table 5.2 also shows that female-headed households spend slightly more on food prepared outside the home than male-headed household. Households headed by street food vendors and petty traders, who are typically women, also spend a higher proportion of their food budget on food prepared outside the home (42.2 and 33.5 per cent respectively). This observation is consistent with Levin et al.’s (1999) study on female traders and vendors, which found that female-headed households spend proportionally more of their income on food than male-headed households (60.2 and 51.5 per cent respectively). This disparity reveals a gendered dimension to the general picture, and it implies that as women increasingly participate in the urban workforce and take on the income generating role, their families will tend to rely more on meals prepared away from home in order to supplement their household food needs. In this case, household expenditure on food will continue to increase as quantities of food available for the household remains stable or decline.

The patterns and trend noted above present a glimpse into household food availability and consumption in the city. Household food costs take up a significant share of the household budget (see Levin et. al., 1999), with this proportion higher for low-income and female-headed households. Although households are spending more on food, they are not necessarily consuming greater quantities of food, and this is simply because of the rising cost of food.
5.2 Reliability of Accra’s Food Markets

Given the extensive reliance of urban households on food purchases, the study sought to determine the reliability of the city’s food markets from the customers’ perspective. Do market customers patronize one or more markets for their food needs? How often do these customers come to the market? What are some of the difficulties the customers encounter in purchasing sufficient quantities of food from the market? Driven by questions such as these, interviews were conducted with customers in all three markets to gain a better understanding of how adequately the markets they patronized met their household food needs.

The dominant trend that emerged from the interviews is that most people make frequent trips to the market to purchase food. The proportion of respondents who indicated that they visit the market very often represents 85 per cent of the total sample at Achimota market, 81 per cent at Madina market and 76 per cent at Agbogbloshie market. As table 5.3 shows, market patrons made more daily visits to Achimota market, compared to the two other markets.

Table 5.3- Frequency of Visits to the Market

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Visits</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Achimota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very often</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 times a week</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not too often</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fortnightly</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At most once/ month</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field survey
This trend partially explains why a high proportion of household budgets go into food, as it means that more households tend to purchase food in small quantities rather than purchasing in bulk. The proportion is even higher when one factors in additional expenses incurred towards getting food, especially transportation costs. The respondents offered a variety of reasons as to why they made frequent trips to the market, but the dominant reasons stated were the nature of household diets, the desire to purchase fresh produce to prepare meals, the lack of refrigeration facilities at home to store foods for extended periods of time, and proximity to the market. The responses indicate that for many market patrons, shopping in the market was a routine.

The interesting dimension of the trend noted above is that more than half of the respondents (about 55 per cent) also indicated that they purchased food from other markets in the city on a regular basis. The remaining 45 per cent relied solely on one market for the bulk of their household food purchases. As figure 5.1 below indicates, approximately 60 per cent of the respondents at Achimota market purchased food for their households in other markets. At Madina market, there was an almost equal split between customers who relied solely on that market and those who purchased foods elsewhere. This picture at Agbogbloshie market mirrors that of the entire sample. These results suggest that the patrons of smaller markets like Achimota tend to utilize the market primarily for the convenience of proximity, but at the cost of comparatively higher food prices. The caveat though, is that when they have to travel far to the central markets to purchase these same food items, their cost may actually be higher than what they get in the smaller markets, since transportation cost alone can offset any potential
These customers are also more likely to utilize the larger markets for bulk purchases and non-perishable food items.

**Figure 5.1: Proportion of Customers who Purchased Food from Other Markets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achimota</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madina</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agbogbloshie</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field survey

At Achimota market, the main reason cited for purchasing food elsewhere was the price difference between food products found in this market and the larger markets in the city. This reason also helps to explain why food traders at Achimota market complained about a slowdown in food purchases for them. In a medium sized market such as Madina, where prices tended to match closely with those in the central markets, there was a smaller proportion of customers purchasing household food from other markets. At Agbogbloshie market, 57 per cent of the customers interviewed purchased food from other markets. Given that the primary users of this market are retailers from other markets in the city, it is understandable why such a high number of patrons here will purchase food from other outlets in the city. The majority of household customers who were surveyed turned out to be people who worked in the city centre and incorporated
purchasing food from this market into their routine. These customers, therefore, continued to purchase food from the markets within their communities. These findings are important for a number of reasons. Many market patrons will most likely purchase their food from multiple markets or a combination of markets and other food outlets, given that there is no significant difference between the different types of markets. Additionally, the multiplicity of food markets and outlets in the city does not necessarily mean households will not travel long distances to purchase food.

On the whole, the customers surveyed expressed satisfaction with their markets in terms of availability of food. The proportion of respondents who indicated that they could not always find the type of food they want in the market was less than 5 per cent of those surveyed. The market patrons, however, expressed frustrations with the unpredictable nature of food prices and variations from trader to trader within the same market. The narratives below represent some of the responses in this regard:

“Different traders have different prices for the same items. Everyone has their own price” (Achimota Market)

“The only problem is the cost ... today for instance I realized that the cost of garden eggs has gone up again ... The same quantity now cost double what it cost last year” (Achimota Market)

“The main difficulty is the prices. They increase everyday. Today you buy a commodity for 10,000 cedis ... The next day you go the price shoots up so the only problem I have is the prices” (Madina Market)

“Prices just go up and not stable, so sometimes I get short of money. It is always more expensive than the last time” (Agbobloshie Market)

“sometimes the prices are too exorbitant. The traders set their prices arbitrarily so they take advantage of the customers. But if you can bargain properly, you can get a good deal” (Agbobloshie Market)
Besides food prices, transportation was the other major problem cited by respondents. Without one’s own means of transport, it was very costly to transport food purchased from the market as transport operators charged an extra fare for the load. Thus in instances where people could afford to travel to the major wholesale markets to purchase food, any cost savings was negated up by the transportation costs.

Food markets in Accra can, therefore, be described as quite reliable when viewed in terms of their ability and capacity to make available a wide variety of food items for the city’s residents. The situation is, however, masked by the problems that have been described above and the perception of poor organization in the markets. The urban food supply regime, however informal, appears to have kept pace with the demand for food in the growing city. This description, it must be noted, only represents the perspective of market patrons and may not reflect the view of the larger city population who do not, or rarely utilize the city’s formal food markets.

5.3 **Household Food Acquisition Patterns in the City**

It has been clearly established that food purchases are the dominant source of food for households within the city. What is not so clear, however, is how different types of households in the city engage with the city’s food markets in the process of bringing food home. Given the emerging trends in food trade and the proliferation of food outlets in the city, have urban markets been able to maintain their historic role of being the dominant source of food for households in the city? Because of the study’s focus on household interaction with urban food markets, the household surveys were designed to capture
information on food purchasing patterns and food sources for the different types of neighborhoods in the city.$^{55}$

Results from the surveys indicate that the several types of households responded differently to the food situation in the city. High income households consume more foods from animals and vegetables, while low income households are more likely to consume large amounts of staple food such as maize- and cereal-based foods, roots, and tubers, as these are the types of food they can afford most of the time. These findings are also consistent with the findings of the Accra Food and Nutrition Study, which indicted that better off households have a more diversified diet compared to low income households (Maxwell et. al, 2000). While some of these observations are obvious, they also point to geographies of food acquisition in the city as it relates to what type of food is purchased and in what quantity. The differences are important in mapping out the associations between demographic, social, and economic characteristics of households, and their food acquisition habits regarding “what” and “how much” food is purchased and consumed in the different areas of the city.

While household dynamics, particularly household income, size, and the gender and occupation of the household head do influence how and what type of food is brought into the home and how much, they do not necessary influence where the food is purchased. In other words, differences in positionality of households on the urban socio-economic spectrum play a role mainly in conditioning the “what” and “how much”, but not the “where” of food acquisition. The surveys revealed similar trends across the six

$^{55}$ The diet and nutrition aspects of household food consumption were not covered in the household surveys. The surveys were originally designed to focus on differences in food acquisition strategies that existed within the different types of neighbourhoods identified for the study and how these differences influence the nature of interaction between households and food markets.
neighbourhoods when the discussion turns to the engagement with different “places” to purchase food within the city—namely the food market in its traditional and functional sense, itinerant food vendors (hawkers), street food vendors, supermarkets, corner stores, and the plethora of ‘trading spaces’ that have now become an integral part of the city’s landscape.

Emerging from the household surveys are three types of households, based on the primary place of purchasing food as depicted in table 5.4 below. The first group of respondents represents those households who rely to varying degrees on both the vendors and markets for their food purchases. This group comprises about 49 per cent of the households in all the different types of neighbourhoods involved in the study. Households within this group do purchase food from the traditional markets, but also rely on the variety of food outlets in the city. As one participant within this group expressed, *food is everywhere- in the marketplace, in the community, around the corner”* (interview 6, Asylum Down). This group represents the dominant trend in food acquisition for most households in the city.

Direct engagement with food markets in the process of bringing food home varies from household to household depending on their level of interaction with other food outlets in the city. Although the reasons for engaging the different types of food outlets differs from household to household across the various neighbourhoods, the trend towards utilizing multiple food outlets points to the importance of supplementing one food outlet with another. It also signifies household adaptation to the changing landscape of food provisioning and the visible presence of food in the city. It also points to the city’s residents embracing the paradigm of cohabitation between the formal food markets
and the other types of food outlets across the city. This trend also reveals the fact that the dichotomy between formal market and other food outlets may not be very important for many households. In the words of one respondent,

“whether I buy the food in the market or by the roadside or in a store does not matter... what matters is for whenever I want buy food for my family, I should get it somewhere at a price that is affordable” (interview 12, Bubuahsie).

Table 5.4: Classification of Respondents’ Households on ‘Place’ of Food Purchase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood</th>
<th>Socio-demographic classification</th>
<th>Food Acquisition Classification (number of households)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Marketplace only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukura/Russia</td>
<td>High density low class sector</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bubuashie</td>
<td>Medium density indigenous sector</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asylum Down</td>
<td>Medium density middle class sector</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantonments</td>
<td>Low density high class sector</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baatsona</td>
<td>Low density middle class sector</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nungua</td>
<td>High Density Indigenous sector</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey

The second group represents those households who rely solely on other food outlets outside the established central and neighbourhood markets in the city for their food. This group, comprising 35 per cent of the households surveyed, has virtually no direct interaction with the city’s food markets, as members rarely make any food purchase from the markets even within their neighbourhoods. The dominant voice in this
group is, “food is just round the corner ... why go the market?” (interview 17, Baatsona).

As such, there is no engagement with the food markets in the process of bringing food home. Households in this group do not reject the markets, and they recognize the important role the markets play in ensuring a continuous supply of food into their neighbourhoods. However, they choose not to go to the market to purchase food, and this may be because of lifestyles or life situations. For some households in this group, traveling to the market simply to buy food is not worth the effort, as these other food outlets adequately meet their food needs. This group includes a significant number of households whose residents depend on ‘street foods’, fast food locales, and restaurants, but there are other households that rely on these traders for a variety of unprocessed foods.

The third group represents those households within the city who rely solely on the established food markets for food purchases, even for the smallest amounts. The dominant voice for this group is, “the marketplace is the authentic place to purchase food” (interview 2, Nungua). Within all six neighbourhoods, this group of households is the smallest- comprising only about 16 per cent of the households surveyed. Typical households within this group are households that purchase food in bulk and rarely patronize ready-to-eat foods in the city. Some households in this group regard the operation of small-scale food vendors in the city as a nuisance. They also believe that food prices are always lower in the market compared to the prices charged by traders outside the markets. Most have certain traders in the market from whom they buy specific food items and obtain assistance to purchase other food items. The households within this group do not necessarily depend on just one market- they do purchase food
from various city markets. What singles them out from the other groups of households is the fact that any food item that is brought into the household is purchased directly from the market. This is the group that shows the strongest link between the household and the market, where the city’s residents directly engage with the market in bringing food home.

These findings are noteworthy because they paint a picture of what is happening to the way households engage with the food markets vis-à-vis other food outlets in the city in order to meet their food needs. Although the markets continue to play a dominant role in the provision of food in the city, the level of direct interaction between the individual household units and the market is declining. Other food outlets in the city appear to be taking over this direct role of bringing food into the household, and this trend seems to cut across the traditional socio-economic divides in the city. As the survey results indicate, more households rely solely on other food outlets than those who rely solely on food markets (39 per cent versus 19 per cent). This may be an indication of the acceptance of these outlets by households in the city.

5.4 Discussion: Towards a New Geography of Food Acquisition in Accra

As the results presented in the previous section indicate, asking questions about where households are buying their food enables us to move beyond the narrow confines of understanding food acquisition strategies from what kinds of food is purchased in the various neighbourhoods, to how households engage with the variety of food outlets in the city. For example, a socio-economic analysis of neighbourhood characteristics such as household income, size, gender dynamics or occupation may highlight differences that exist in household food expenditure as a proportion of the household budget or
diversification of the household diet across various neighbourhoods. A focus on these differences, however, may mask the broad patterns and trends that are emerging or exist within these neighborhoods (which are themselves fixtures of our socio-economic classification criteria), the processes underlying these trends, and how these trends and processes provide answers to the changing nature of the city and its implications for access to resources and basic needs.

The classification of urban households on the basis of where food is purchased, therefore, presents a new way of understanding food acquisition within the context of a rapidly growing city. It demonstrates the extent to which urban households engage with food markets, how this relationship is changing with the steady surge in other food outlets within the urban landscape, and the challenges posed to access to food in the city. This type of analysis is crucial in uncovering how households devote time and resources to seek entitlement to food within the ever changing urban environment and how distinct ‘spaces’ are created in the process.

The similar patterns expounded between the different neighbourhoods in terms of household engagement with the city’s food markets and other food outlets (and the ‘spaces’ this engagement creates) may appear exaggerated, but it emphasizes a vital reality: that urban restructuring alters how urban households engage with urban food markets. This is because the restructuring process has contributed to two major changes with regards to food supply and distribution in the city. First, it has led to changes within the food markets, particularly with the growing number of, and differentiation between, traders, and rising food costs (which were described in chapter four). Second, urban restructuring has contributed to the creation of multiple food outlets, traders, and vendors.
within city. These two changes have, in turn, altered how household interact with food outlets within the city.

The three distinct ‘spaces’ of food acquisition in all six neighbourhoods described in the preceding section have therefore been created as a result of alterations to the household-market interface. These new spaces are expressions of how households are coping with changes to the city’s food landscape- that is, where food is available for purchase. As well, they mark the weakening of the historical dominance of urban food markets in the direct provision of food to urban households. These alterations are necessitated by the conditions of contemporary urbanism in the countries of the South, which have engendered fundamental shifts in the socio-cultural and economic foundations of these cities. Urban residents respond to these shifts by constantly renegotiating their relationship with the urban environment and adopting different strategies to meet their needs.

Households alter their food provisioning processes in response to changes in their internal circumstances and the how food is made available in the city. The ability to secure sufficient quantities of food for its members depends on how well the household has adopted to these internal and external changes. The results of the household surveys indicate that alterations to the ways in which food is made available are crucial to the emerging geography of food acquisition in the city. Despite the different socio-cultural and economic positioning of households in the various neighbourhoods, they all showed similar patterns of waning engaging with food markets and increasing engagement with other food outlets. This can be a positive or negative development depending on the impact it has on household food acquisition processes- that is, the extent to which
households are successful in developing strategies that enable them to bring adequate quantities of food home.

This alteration is ultimately made concrete by the way household decisions on where to purchase food is taken and how much food can be purchased. Households may alter their food purchasing patterns as a way of coping with the changing food landscape. There are varying manifestations of this coping strategy, but the most dramatic expressions uncovered during the field surveys relate to the frequency of trips to the market, food consumption habits, and food expenditure. These dimensions of individual household strategies are demonstrated in the sample statements below:

“we do not cook as much as we used to. We usually cook in the evening, when we all come home. During the day we all buy food from our workplace and we give the children money to buy food at school” (Interview 7, Asylum Down)

“we only buy food in small quantities. We can’t afford to buy in bulk anymore. In a way, it is better when make bulk purchase... that is what we used to do; but now we just buy what can last us for about one week” (Interview 18, Bubuashie)

“with all these sellers around here we don’t have to travel far to buy food anymore. You can get what you want right at your doorstep... but sometimes their food is not as fresh as the one in the market but we buy it all the same” (Interview 11, Nungua)

These alterations can also reinforce existing conditions of inequality within and between neighbourhoods, and differential access to food for households in the city. For poor households in the city, this change is a difficult one, and this is expressed in terms of how challenging food acquisition has become. Some of the narratives show how food acquisition was a constant struggle for some poor households in the city:

“Food? In Accra? How can food be a problem in Accra? Just look around us... Food is everywhere. You can get any type of food you want anywhere in Accra...when people tell you that it’s difficult to get food in Accra, it is money problems. ... Food is not the issue; the money to buy the food is. Everyday is a
struggle to make sure that your children have something to eat” (Interview 5, Sukura/Russia)

“Everyday is a different story...you have to start the thinking process again: what will we eat today?... Anytime I go to the market, I have to consider the amount of money I have and the quantity of food I want to buy... Because the prices change everyday, I end up buying less food that I budgeted for. Sometimes I have to forgo some items that I wanted to buy. If you buy exactly what you need and how much you need you will go over your budget. If you don’t have the extra money, how can you go over the budget?” (Interview 2, Sukura/Russia)

“the very thought of going out to buy food is in itself very stressful... when I look at how much money I have and ask myself, ‘how much food it can buy’... before you even set off you know you will be doing the calculations over and over again” (Interview 11, Nungua)

While urban restructuring and alterations to the food landscape have created three distinct ‘spaces’ of food acquisition in the city, urban households can still be differentiated when we consider how they respond differently to these processes of change. Therefore, each distinct ‘space’ can further be differentiated on the basis of the kinds of coping strategies that are developed to adopt to the change, how these changes further alter household food habits and preferences, and the difficulties the changes create for access to food for different households. For most households, their coping strategies are an integral part of the urban landscape. They consider their experiences as a part of daily living in the city, and even if the outcomes are not desirable, these strategies for survival still help them get by.

5.5 Enhancing Household Access to Food in the City

The most pervasive perception about food expressed during the study is that it is abundant in the city. This point was reiterated time and again by the various actors that
were involved in this study: in the offices, in the neighbourhoods, and at the markets. One of the respondents at Sukura/Russia succinctly captured this idea in the words:

“Food? Here in Accra? How can food be a problem in Accra? Just look around us... Food is everywhere.” (interview 5, Sukura/Russia)

It is worthy of note, however, that while food is everywhere, because of its price, it is not always accessible to everyone in the city. The evidence presented in the narratives above clearly illustrates this point. The evidence also indicates that the food supply landscape in the city has also been altered dramatically, along with broader structural transformations within the city. Households in the city have responded to these changes by adjusting their food purchasing practices.

Coping with the changing food landscape in Accra is even more challenging because of the insignificant role of food production within the city and food received through gifts and transfers (section 5.1). While the opportunity for urban cultivation exists, the evidence suggests that this practice is not widespread in the city. As a result, food purchases place enormous stress on household finances. For most poor households, having sufficient quantities of food is first and foremost a livelihood issue. These households remain vulnerable because they lack the means to secured incomes within the city. Without the security of steady and predictable incomes, these households cannot keep up with soaring food prices in the city. In this light, their vulnerability is regarded as being largely the outcome of the rapid demographic, economic, and political transformations occurring within the city, and further reflects entitlement failure with regard to food provisioning. The food issue is thus essentially a livelihoods issue. Therefore, any improvements to household food supply will emanate from improvements
to those situations that affect how households interact with the food outlets in the city, and how much food they are able to purchase.

The urban food issue is also a lifestyle issue. It is a representation of how individual households’ food acquisition practices and consumption patterns have altered as a consequence of the changes within the food supply environment. Households adopt the path that enables them to best meet their food needs. For some households, eating outside the home may be the preferred alternative to either supplementing or replacing home-prepared meals. The kind of eatery that one patronizes, or the type of food that they consume depends on their ability to pay, but it also reflects their life situations and tastes. For many wealthy households, shopping in a supermarket or eating out in a restaurant is associated with status, and this is merely symbolic and attests to the changing culture of a section of the urban population. For some other households, eating out may be necessitated by the requirements of urban living which make relying on street foods the only option available to them.

While most participants in this study expressed that food availability at the city level is not a problem, it would be misleading to think that there are no problems with the city’s food supply and distribution system. The challenges encountered by traders espoused in the previous chapter, as well as the structural lapses in the city’s food marketing system discussed in chapter three need to be addressed as a first step to improving access to food in the city. Additionally, it is vital to pay attention to the rising cost of food, considering the intricate link between food prices and how much food households can acquire. The rising cost of food, especially its fluctuating and unpredictable nature was the principal factor cited by the majority of respondents as a
challenge to securing sufficient quantities of food for the household. One major contributing factor for the high cost of food in Accra is transportation costs, which is related to fuel costs. Transportation operators usually pass on a disproportional share of any increment in fuel cost to traders, who in turn pass the cost onto their customers by increasing the price of their wares. As such, any time there is an increase in the price of fuel, food prices rise by an even greater proportion.

The picture painted by the survey participants portrays a continued reliance on other food outlets and vendors as opposed to the city’s established markets. In so far as the city dwellers patronize these outlets, traders will respond to this need, first to meet the demand, and second to take advantage of the livelihood opportunities that this trend presents. This changing food acquisition pattern in the city is poised to present an enormous challenge for city planners, as they seek to restrict the food trade to designated places within the city. One option for curbing this trend is to work more closely not only with the market leadership, but also with the marginalized traders to improve conditions in the market that will make it “the place” to buy and sell food in the city. This approach will minimize the spread of “illegal markets” that are started by people who see trading as a means to earning an income, but perceive that they would not be welcome into the market. It will also reduce conflicts between the authorities and traders who squat and trade in unauthorized places.

5.6 Conclusion

The foregoing discussion has outlined food acquisition and consumption patterns in Accra and indicated that the level of direct interaction between the city’s household
and its market institutions is quite weak. Fewer households in the city rely solely on the food markets as the source of household food. Although food markets and the traders therein play a crucial role in the city’s food supply chain, the bourgeoning food outlets that operate outside these markets have broken the direct link between market and household, and have transformed the markets into playing more of an intermediary role. Reversing the trend requires creating conditions that will make the marketplace more attractive to both traders and customers.

As the survey results clearly indicate, through the process of acquiring food, households engage with the variety of food outlets in the city in ways that are grounded in everyday reality. This process has created distinct patterns of food acquisition in the city, and this pattern seems to cut across the socio-economic divide in the city. This trend notwithstanding, there are still issues related to access to sufficient food for some households because of the centrality of purchased food to the household food basket. Some of the struggles people experience in this regard have been described in the narratives presented.

The next chapter elevates the analysis from a food issue to an urban livelihoods issue, and illustrates how the urban food issue is reflective of broader structural changes within the contemporary Third World city. The discussion notes how this specific case study is illustrative of similar processes of change in the city, and how individuals and households are responding to these changes.
CHAPTER SIX

PERSPECTIVES ON LIVELIHOODS, POVERTY, AND FOOD PROVISIONING IN ACCRA

6.0 Introduction

Despite the growing number of people residing in the towns and cities of the Third World, not much attention has been paid to how these people feed themselves. Also, while there is a growing body of literature on the changing dynamics within Third World cities, the critical links that exist between these changes and how urban residents respond to these changes are often missing from the discussion. This chapter therefore contributes towards bridging this gap by illustrating how the insights garnered from food provisioning in Accra depict how urban residents, particularly poor people, cope with the changes occurring in the Third World city.

The chapter draws on the lessons learned from the field surveys, as well as informal conversations with several individuals at various stages of the research, to show how people survive amidst an ever-changing urban environment that is often inimical to their welfare. Although the individual perspectives and personal accounts lie at the heart of this dissertation, reference is made to the burgeoning literature on urban growth and change in the Third World. The Accra investigation points to both convergence and divergence when compared to the experience of the Third World city.

The first part of the chapter examines the process of urban restructuring within the contemporary Third World city, with an emphasis on the role of different actors in the process of reshaping the city. This section is followed by a discussion of various means of responding to challenges in the city as expressed on the ground. The discussion
outlines the key components of coping and explains how individuals continuously negotiate the urban landscape in order to make ends meet. The final section considers how the urban food system is being altered in response to the structural changes within the city and how this affects access to food by various households in the city.

6.1 Reconfiguring the Landscape: Actors and Processes (Re)Shaping the City

Towns and cities are in a constant condition of flux. This state is often the result of activities and process involving both internal and external agents and forces. According to Drakakis-Smith (2000), cities in the Third World exhibit both differences and similarities often linked to local and global processes. For example, the global forces include a neo-liberal market economy and increasing influences of the First World and its several multi-national corporations. Meanwhile, the local forces include Third World state policy and historical traditions in culture and economy.

Processes and activities that alter a city’s morphology are conceptualized here as expressions of power and/or powerlessness- in its normative sense; who holds it, who wields it, to achieve what means, who lacks it, why they lack it, and what the consequences are. This conception enables us to understand more closely the role of various actors in this continuous process of change occurring in the contemporary Third World city.

The process of globalization, marked by the integration of the world’s economic and political systems (and to a lesser degree social and cultural systems) has undoubtedly enabled external actors to contribute to re-moulding the urban landscape of many Third World countries. In most African and Latin American countries, this incorporation into
the global system was embodied in the adoption of structural adjustment programs (SAPs), which resulted in the loss of political, economic, and cultural control (Riddell, 2003a). Riddell (ibid) argues that globalization has led to a marked decline in the ability for many citizens in the Third World to control, plan, and regulate the most crucial sectors of their economies. Third World cities were the hardest hit by the neo-liberal policies employed under structural adjustment, as they witnessed increasing immigration, decreasing formal employment, falling wages, and collapsing revenues (Davis 2006).

SAPs were designed to be anti-urban in nature; specifically to correct the ‘urban bias’ that hitherto existed in government policy making, in order to improve the life of the majority of the population living in the countryside and to restore the previous unfair appropriation by the state for its personnel and the urban elite (ibid; Bryceson and Bank, 2001). Consequently, not much attention was paid to how these changes might adversely affect urban populations. Additionally, the emerging spatial form of the Third World city, especially in Africa, is steeped in globalization and structural adjustment (Briggs and Yeboah, 2001; Yeboah, 2001). Yeboah (2000) explains how globalization through structural adjustment has provided the enabling circumstances for global and local actors to contribute to the city’s expansion and my Accra investigation indicates that such alteration follows several key dimensions:

a) One of the most visible effects of structural adjustment on the urban economy is the growth of informal economic activities such as trade, service provision, and petty commodity production, especially in the urban areas (Riddell, 1997). Zack-Williams (2000) points out that daily wagem workers were first victims of
adjustment policies, as they are structured out of employment. These conditions created a wave of unemployment and prospects for self-employment in the informal sector. The informal sector then became a haven for those faced with unemployment after structural adjustment. Related to the above scenario is the creation of what has been termed the ‘new urban poor’ and the ‘hollowing out’ of the middle class. This process is attributed to the loss of jobs and incomes for people in the public sector and civil service, as well as declining real wages and disposable incomes for middle-class professionals in the midst of cuts in social spending and rising cost (see Zack-Williams, 2000). The implementation of structural adjustment policies therefore attests to the influence of external forces in the process of transformation witnessed in the city. The neo-liberal framework of globalization continues to be the guiding principle for formulating basic needs policies, with drastic consequences for who has access to what in the city.

b) Changes within the political economy of the Third World city are more subtle. Employing the experiences of South Africa and Zimbabwe with economic reform as examples, Andreasson (2003; 384) notes the “disappointing gap between expectations and results in reforming countries”. According to him, neo-liberal reforms have among other things, aggravated exclusionism and resulted in a move toward ‘virtual democracy’- defined in the text as “having a formal basis in citizen rule but with key decision-making insulated from popular involvement and oversight” (p. 385). Andreasson further explains that ‘virtual democracy’ “comes at the expense of inclusive, participatory democracy” (p. 385). This view
postulates that the policy- and decision-making processes are influenced largely by actors operating elsewhere, and results in the failure of the local actors to direct the nature and pace of their own development. This view lends credence to the failure of structural adjustment policies, driven by neo-liberal reforms, to substantially improve the welfare of urban residents in the long term.

c) Globalization has had devastating consequences for most people in Third World cities, especially the poor. It has, to a very large extent, excluded many urban residents in the decision-making process. More importantly, it has forced many within the growing urban population to seek alternative ways to meet their basic needs. As formal employment prospects decline, people are forced to work harder inside and outside the home to compensate for lost incomes and cuts in social services. They adopt ‘new’ strategies that will enable people to adapt to, and cope with, the challenges they face. These ‘new’ strategies alter how the city’s residents interact with their physical and socio-economic environment to meet their needs, and in the process, reconfigure the urban landscape. Coping strategies are most evident in the provision of housing, food and other basic amenities in the city.

The city’s landscape is, in effect, a representation of the outcome of external actors working to restructure the city, and the survival strategies adopted by those who are adversely affected by this transformation. It is important to note that whereas the influence of external agents in shaping the face of the city is not peculiar to the Third
World, it is how locals participate in and respond to the changes that make it distinct. Also, the processes and outcomes of change have had differential effects on urban residents: indeed, there are ‘winners’, just as there are ‘losers’. The winners, termed ‘disciples’ by Riddell (2003a) represent the local agents of change who benefit immensely from this process of change, as opposed to the ‘damned’- the ordinary citizens who are victims of the process. These two sets of actors work in tandem to alter the face of the contemporary Third World city.

6.2 Juggling and Straddling: Responding to the Challenges City Living

“Busumi akatua, yentumi enfanye bibiaa”\textsuperscript{56}

“Ke otsuu, onaa, ke onaa oyee, ke oyee homo baaye bo”\textsuperscript{57}

The quotes above, cited by participants in two separate interviews clearly capture the general attitude of the urban poor to employment, incomes, and entitlement to food in the city. They are consonant with the individual stories narrated during the field surveys. These quotes are illuminating because they are indicative of the pervasiveness of insufficient incomes in the city. Because of the paucity of jobs, declining and volatile household incomes, the process of providing needs has been transformed into a process of survival for a section of the urban population. As well, they demonstrate an acknowledgment of the crucial link between earning an income and providing for one’s needs and that of their dependants. Popular expressions such as breadwinner, or putting

\textsuperscript{56} A line from a Ghanaian hi-life song, which translates, “one’s monthly income is barely enough to do anything with”.

\textsuperscript{57} A line from another hi-life song, which translates, “if you don’t work, you will not remain poor; if you are poor, you will have nothing to eat; and when you have nothing to eat, you will go hungry”
bread on the table were elevated from the rhetoric of the raison d’être that is often taken for granted, to a herculean task that requires tact, balancing, and juggling.

More importantly, these expressions and others recounted during the field surveys indicate that the broad structural changes described earlier are translated into people’s lives and given expression in how they interact with the urban environment. The changes present opportunities and challenges to the people who live in the city. Within this context, urban residents have to find innovative ways to pursue their livelihoods and meet their needs. This process often involves managing their interaction with the powerful economic and political agents of change that seek to impose particular uses of within the city. They respond by employing an array of strategies that will enable them to cope-or as it were, shift their way of life to suit the demands of the changing urban environment. In much of the literature on Third World cities, processes of restructuring have been associated with crises and difficulty, and the contribution of structural changes to the increasing levels of poverty in these cities have been noted (see Drakakis Smith, 1996; 1997; Gilbert, 1994; Riddell, 1992; 1997; Simon, 2002; Tskikata, undated; Wratten, 1995). The discussion is now shifting from an analysis of the causes of the crises to how people are coping with them (see Bangura, 1994; Hanson, 2000; Riddell, 2003b; Ruel et. al., 1999; Simone, 2001) in order to understand the tactics that people develop to overcome the challenges and access opportunities in the precarious urban environment.

Changes in livelihood systems have been profound, with the key coping strategy being increasing one’s portfolio in income generating activities in the burgeoning informal sector. In seeking multiple sources of income, individuals have come to rely on social formations, relationships, and networks to secure employment in sectors with low
wages and insecure tenure. According to Simone (2001), these social formations are ephemeral, comprising very fluid and malleable arrangements that enable people to ‘make do’ in the city. Such arrangements have become vital to adapting to urban economic change and circumstances in which people find themselves. The success of these arrangements, however, depends on forging a bond of solidarity through kinship, ethnicity, social ties, and the common sense of purpose.

As Banguru (1994) notes, social relations such as these run contrary to the assumptions of neoclassical economic theory, which regards individuals as self-interested utility maximizers, and believes in the power of the market to provide individuals with the information needed to make rational decisions. The crucial elements of reciprocity, cooperation, compromise, and trust allow participants to share resources from a ‘common pool’ and sustain the relationship. Banguru (1994) further states that, “in the case of Africa … economic contraction has elevated issues of personal relations, traditional values and networking as important component in survival and accumulation strategies” (p. 790). Through these social relationships and networks, individuals are able to navigate the complex urban landscape and seek out livelihood opportunities and incomes. The social formation are regarded here as informal safely nets which have gained prominence in the wake of increasing uncertainty in the city.

The host of income generating activities, together with the social relations that are built around these activities are the only way out of poverty for most people in the city. What is interesting, at least from the perspective of those engaged in this study, is the fact most people do not regard their employment as sustainable in the long run. This fact was reiterated in the interviews at the markets and highlighted in chapter four. For a lot of
people, their current employment status is only transitory, with an eye on a more stable job within other sectors of the urban economy.

A careful examination of the urban informality reveals that peoples’ perception of its unsustainable nature with regards to incomes is not unfounded. In many cases, the establishment of these individual- or home-based activities runs afoul to some city by-laws. As such, proprietors are constantly engaged in a battle with city authorities and face an uncertain future when threatened with closure. Consequently, most people deliberately refuse to invest heavily in their businesses (even if they are in a position to do so) for fear of losing all their investment. Some proprietors expressed frustration with the steps involved in “legalizing” their business, and the lack of government support for small-scale enterprises. Another dimension to the unstable nature of such employment opportunities in the city pertains to the ease of entry into such business ventures. Successful employment ventures in the city quickly become clogged with new entrants, a process facilitated by the social formations described earlier. As one respondent put it,

“we are all looking for work, so when you hear that this business is going well, we all go into it... but before long, there are so many people doing the same thing so the business goes down ... It’s just not profitable anymore” (personal interview, Madina).

As a result of these problems, the employment situation remains precarious in the city, and despite the optimism placed in the informal sector, it only provides minimal subsistence support for people in the city. It is not uncommon to find people rotating between different business activities at different time periods. Those activities that tend to be a bit more stable are those that included some level of training or apprenticeship, such as hairdressing, sewing, carpentry, auto mechanics, etc. For those involved in these
trades, because of the cost and time spent in training, it was considered worthwhile to remain in the business while seeking supplementary sources of income.

Urban restructuring has also led to lifestyle changes. As a result of declining incomes and restricted access to services and facilities in the city, individuals have to readjust their lifestyles in order to cope. The requirement to work longer hours for example, has affected household consumption patterns by increasing the reliance on food prepared outside the home. The provision of housing is another area that demonstrates how the poor navigate the urban landscape to find shelter in the slums and abandoned spaces in the city. Coping in this regard has led to over-exploitation of the scarce resources available to households, limiting consumption of basic services such as water, sewage, and electricity, and children forgoing school to participate in the economy in order to supplement household incomes.

The challenge of securing sufficient quantities of food for individuals and households is exacerbated by the precarious urban livelihood environment. Due to the high reliance on cash incomes for food purchases discussed previously, urban restructuring and the ensuing loss of jobs and access to resources has adversely affected poor households in particular. In this vein, coping strategies extended into the food realm as well, as individuals and households shift their food purchasing and acquisition practices, eating habits, diets, and nutritional intake to accommodate the reality of inadequate incomes. Individual narratives point to people taking advantage of the increased presence of food in the city, while at the same time not having sufficient money to purchase adequate quantities of it, or not being able to determine when and what they eat. As one patron of street food,
“there is food that one eats just to satisfy his/her hunger, and there is food that one eats to maintain a healthy life” (personal interview, Bubuashie).

This means that there is a section that of the urban population that does not pay attention to the nutrition quality.

The situation portrayed in this study is not unique to Accra, but is representative of similar process in other Third World cities. In another study of access to food by the urban poor in Mwanza, Tanzania, Flynn (2005) uncovered similar complex ways of gaining food in the city. Her study highlights the precarious daily struggles of homeless street people to access food, and the importance of charity as a source of food for non-household based populations in the city. Flynn’s work identified various ways in which people seek entitlement to food, and emphasizes the crucial role of food in everyday life. Studies such as these also reveal that the nature of interaction between urban and rural areas is changing, with lower levels of food transfers from relatives in the hinterland. This trend points to agricultural restructuring that is occurring in rural areas as well, with a move from agricultural-based modes of livelihood (Bryceson and Bank, 2001).

How poor people feed themselves in the city is indicative of how the poor meet other basic needs in the city. It shows how the poor cope as best they can with the relentless need to provide for their families in the face of limited incomes, resources, and options. It also shows how global processes are mediated at the local level, as households negotiate the changing landscape to provide their needs. As Smith (1998) observes, “the coping mechanisms of the poor are designed to gain greater access to the fundamental need and do constitute a conscious resistance to structural adjustment” (p. 216). While I do not subscribe to the idea of coping mechanisms as a “conscious resistance” to adjustment, it is important to recognize that such strategies are specifically tailored to
particular challenges brought about by structural adjustment, that impinge on the well-being of the poor. They must seek out to opportunities to expand their resource base, or make alternative arrangements with their existing resources to make ends meet.

6.3 Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter has emphasized the crucial link between employment, incomes, and access to food in the city. One cannot isolate problems related to access to food from the volatile employment environment or the unstable incomes in the city. Although rapid growth and restructuring is a fact of life in the Third World city, employment opportunities have not grown fast enough to provide livelihoods for the city’s population. As a result the level of deprivation in cities is on the rise, leading to increasing vulnerability and decreasing entitlement to accessing most basic need, including food in the city. The absence of formal safety nets for the urban poor has led to coping strategies for vulnerable households which include altering food acquisition strategies and consumption patterns. Through these coping strategies, people’s levels of vulnerability to these changes have been reduced, although the outcomes of these strategies are not always favorable. Individual and household coping strategies show an increasing complexity and ingenuity, and are marked by adopting multiple identities, roles, and relationships. This multi-pronged approach to surviving shows how urban residents define their needs, set their agenda and priorities, and interact with their social and economic environment in a manner that alters the face of the city.

Primary livelihoods in Accra, as in other Third World cities, are based on the range of activities that comprise the informal sector. The primacy of cash incomes as the
means of acquiring basic needs, including food, cannot be overemphasized. This fact was clearly articulated during the various interviews and conversations. As one respondent put it,

money can’t buy you happiness, but it can buy you a little something that will give you a little respite (personal interview, Nungua).

Given this important role of cash earned through employment, improving livelihood opportunities and incomes will go a long way to enhance access to food and other basic needs. In spite of the dire situation facing the city’s poor, many of those interviewed expressed optimism that they will improve their lot. While people do not expect the situation in the city to improve, they were optimistic that they, as individuals, will improve their capability to meet their needs in the city.

This optimism is a reflection of the resilience of people to find a way out of their predicament, and attests to the ingenuity that enables people to survive in the city. These people are not passive victims to the constraints they face. Their responses to the economic crisis as outlined in the previous chapters and the preceding sections indicate the locus of effort to combat poverty and food insecurity occurs at the individual and household levels. People do their best to protect or expand their livelihoods in order to meet their basic requirements in the city. Understanding how the poor organize themselves to meet their challenges is key to any interventions that are designed to tackle urban poverty or improve access to basic needs in the city.
CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

“Give us this day our daily bread”

As outlined in chapter one, this study has been concerned primarily with the challenge of providing adequate supplies of food to the rapidly growing urban population in the Third World. The study sought to understand how the food system is affected by changes occurring within the city, and how different groups of people in the city are adjusting to the changing nature of food supply. The investigation has shed light on what is happening to the food system in a rapidly changing urban environment. The forgoing discussion draws attention to how the city’s transformation is altering its food landscape and exacerbating the vulnerability of poor individuals and households to food insecurity. Embedded in the discussion are the voices of actors that illustrate the various dimensions of the challenges pertaining to the food problem, and the strategies that are adopted to cope with these challenges. These strategies include changes to where people acquire their food and what they eat. The findings further demonstrate that food provisioning is deeply enmeshed with access to livelihoods and incomes for many people in the city.

The seemingly chaotic state of food supply and distribution in the city is attributed in part to the lack of attention paid by city planning authorities to this issue. The discussion on the city’s policy framework for food delivery in chapter three reveals that the city’s planning regime does not play a leading role in setting the pace for food supply and distribution. These activities are left in the hands of informal traders, and as was clearly emphasized earlier, this reflects the centrality of individual initiatives in averting a food crisis in the city. The lack of policy attention paid to the urban food system also
reflects the pervasive misconception that food is no longer an issue in the city. Feeding the city is no longer the political issue it was in the 1980s when the inception of structural adjustment policies led to dramatic increases in food prices and subsequently food protests (Maxwell, 1999). As Maxwell points out, the structural adjustment era saw fewer incidents of food shortages. As a result, protests over prices and food riots have fallen off the radar because of the increased presence of food in the city. Import liberalization has opened the door for a flood of imported food, which adds to the perception that food supply into the city is not really a problem.

The issue gains importance when the analysis turns to food supply at the household level. The increased presence of food in the city does not, in and of itself, mean that this food is accessible to all households in the city. It is at the household level that the challenge of providing sufficient food becomes visible, and coping and adaptation materialize. Although the neighbourhood surveys revealed a trend towards similar levels of engagement with the city’s food markets among the diverse groups of households in the city, differences exist in food acquisition and consumption patterns between these groups. The lower level of interaction between households and urban food markets does not mean that the city’s food markets are losing their significance in the food supply chain. They remain the nexus between the source of supply (be it locally produced or imported) and the urban household consumer. What is happening now is a growing number of intermediaries, comprising street markets, corner stores, tabletop stalls, hawkers, etc. that have added another layer to the food supply chain and taken on the role of interacting directly with households in meeting their food needs.
The results of the market surveys discussed in chapter four illustrate that the apparent increase in food trading in the city is directly related to employment and incomes, rather than to the demand for food for the city’s growing and diverse population. Because of the low capital outlay required to ‘set up shop’, many people in the city, particularly women, find trading in food as an alternative to unemployment and lack of incomes. Furthermore, the kinds of arrangements that exist between traders in the markets (especially retailing produce on credit, retaining loyal customers) eases some of the burden on the traders, and allows them to remain in the trade. The conversations with the traders also reveal that the traders who benefit most from developments within the markets are mostly the older, established ones who have been in the trade for a considerable period of time. The relatively new traders remain on the margins and face the most challenges in the market environment. These traders regard the food trade as a temporary solution, in hopes of finding permanent jobs in other sectors of the economy. These observations raise critical questions on the ability of the food markets to continuously meet the food demands of the city, and the viability of the food trade as a sustained source of income for traders.

The findings from the household surveys detailed in chapter five points to the city’s residents utilizing the traditional food markets and a variety of food outlets (corner stores, ‘illegal’ markets, itinerant traders, etc.) to satisfy their food needs. It was noted that the level of direct interaction with food markets in the city has declined as a result of the emergence of these other food outlets. Households spend a significant portion of their budgets on food, with a higher proportion for poorer households in the city. Poorer households tend to spend more of their incomes on food because of their inability to
purchase food in bulk and their reliance on meals prepared outside the home. Although most of the city’s residents indicated that they found the market to be reliable, there was a lot of concern expressed about the rising cost of food and its unpredictable nature (a sentiment shared by the market traders as well).

This study has also considered the way in which the food issue is related to processes of globalization in a Third World city. Chapter six highlighted the neo-liberal foundations of the transformations occurring within the city, and the types of responses they engender from the city’s residents. For many households, the reality of economic reforms is declining wages and increasing cost of living in the city. They must continuously seek new opportunities in the rapidly changing urban environment and confront a myriad of challenges in the process. Social formations are considered vital to overcoming challenges, as informal safety nets evolve to minimize the adverse effects of change.

This case study presents very important lessons for the Third World city. While caution is urged in overly generalizing the situation in Accra as representing all Third World cities, the common experience of these cities with increasing globalization, rapid growth, and poverty shows that the lessons from Accra have relevance to other cities with similar experiences. The common problems facing Third World cities can be viewed through the lens of macro geo-political and economic forces operating within a given set of conditions at the micro level and the challenges these present. In this vein, it is critical to further explore how this global-local interaction affects the most vulnerable groups in the city, how they respond, and the kinds of policies required to enhance livelihood opportunities and improve access to basic needs. This study has attempted to set the
stage for further research in this area. Future research will build on this foundation and focus on variations in how the urban poor respond to, and cope with, restructuring in different socio-economic and spatial contexts.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Ntsiful, (?). (2000) “Improvement to Street Food in Ghana - A Historical Perspective” Paper Presented at a Workshop for Stakeholders, Policy Makers and Regulators of Street-Food Vending in Accra, Miklin Hotel, Accra, 25th-26th September, DFID/NRI/FRI PROJECT


# APPENDIX I: AMA CLASSIFICATION OF RESIDENTIAL AREAS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Zone</th>
<th>Areas Affected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st class Residential Area</td>
<td>Cantonments, Kanda Estates, Tesano, Airport Residential Area, Ringway Estates, East Ridge, Police Headquarters Area, North Labone, Roman Ridge, Burma Camp, Kuku Hill, Zoti Area, Asylum Down, Dzorwulu, East Legon, Ablekpe, South Shiashi, North Dzorwulu, Nungua East, East Cantonments, Independence Avenue, T/Junction, Roman Ridge, Dansoman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Class Residential Area</td>
<td>Sukura, Nima, Aborfu, Bubuahie, Mamobi, Mamponse, Gbegbeyise, Shiabi, Zabramaline, New Mamprobi, New Fadama, Chemuna, North Labone, Korle Gonno, Osu Alata/Ashante, Alajo, South Shiashi, Avenor Area, Dansoman Amanhoma, Osu Ako-Adjei, Nungua Zongo, Kotobabi, Odorkor, Darkuman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Class Residential Area</td>
<td>Teshie Old Town, Nungua Old Town, Asere, Bukom, Chokor, Ussher Town, Abosey Okai, Zongo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Government of Ghana, 2004

---

58 Selected research sites are noted in **bold**, and residential areas that fall more than one category are noted in *italics.*
### APPENDIX II: QUALITATIVE/QUANTITATIVE PARADIGMS

#### Inherent Differences between Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Quantitative Paradigm</th>
<th>Qualitative Paradigm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basis</strong></td>
<td>Positivism and empiricism</td>
<td>Interpretivism and constructivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Epistemology</strong></td>
<td>Investigator and investigated are independent entities.</td>
<td>Investigator and investigated are interactively linked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Investigator can study a phenomenon without influencing and being influenced by it.</td>
<td>There is no access to reality independent of our minds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ontology</strong></td>
<td>There is only one truth, which exists independent of human perception.</td>
<td>Reality is socially constructed. Hence there are multiple realities; or multiple truths based on one’s construction of reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal</strong></td>
<td>Search for empirical indicators which represent the truth.</td>
<td>Focus on process and meaning through examining symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Measure and analyze causal relationships between variables within a value-free framework.</td>
<td>Search for reality within the context of the situation which shapes the inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emphasis</strong></td>
<td>Breadth; large sample size to ensure it represents the population.</td>
<td>Depth; small, purposeful sample which may not represent the population, but can provide important, detailed information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Berg, 2001; Sale et al., 2002; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998.
APPENDIX III: GUIDES FOR INTERVIEWS/FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

A. Public- and Private- sector officials, consultants and experts

- Please provide a brief overview of your organization and your specific position
- Please describe the overall social, political, and economic development conditions of your Accra.
- What is the scale of the urban food problem from your organization’s perspective?
- What are the “root causes” of this problem?
- What is your organization doing about tackling these problems?
- Do you have any programs/projects/policies in place in this regard?
- Do you have any feedback or indication of results yet?
- In your view, how are rapid expansion of the city and increasing poverty, affecting the city’s food marketing system?
- How can food supply and distribution in the city be improved?
- Problems, constraints??
- Future plans??

B. Market Traders and Service Providers

- For how long have you worked at this market?
- What kinds of foodstuff do you sell?
- How/where do you get your produce?
- How has business been, generally?
- What kinds of foodstuff sell fast, and why?
- What are some of the problems you encounter in your business?
- Who are your customers? Where do they come from?
- How long do you intend to stay in this business?
- What changes will you like to see in this market, regarding the way it is run?

C. Market Customers

- Where do you live?
- Why did you come to this market?
- How often do you come here?
- Do you purchase your food from other markets?
- What produce do you mostly get from here?
- What are some of the main difficulties associated with getting food for your household?
- Do you always get what you want from this market?
D. Household interviews

Residential Area_______________________

Type of Dwelling Unit_______________________

- How many people live in your household?
  - No. of income earners
  - No. of dependants
- What are the main sources of income for your household?
- What is the average monthly income for this household?
- What is the main source of food for your household?
- What are your other sources of food?
- What are some of the difficulties associated with getting food for your household?
- How often do you purchase food from the market?
- What produce do you mostly get from the market?
- Do you buy food in bulk or only in small quantities? And why?
- How much money do you spend on food per month?
- How often do you or others in this household cook a day? Why?
- Whose primary responsibility is cooking?
- Who is responsible for major financial decisions within this household?
- What about non-financial decisions?
- Who does what in this household? (reference to household chores)

E. Focus Group Guide for Residential Areas

Residential Area_______________________

- Please describe the overall social, political, and economic development conditions of your neighborhood.
- What are the major issues of concern for your community with respect to food supply and distribution?
- What challenges does your community face with respect to food supply and distribution?
- What factors do you think are responsible for these problems?
- What solutions are available to deal with these problems?
- Is there a ‘small-scale’ market outlet for this area?
- How far is the nearest “wholesale” or ‘retail’ market from this area?
- What problems do this pose to you as a community?
- As a community, what strategies do you have in place to deal with the problems you have identified above?
- Any other issues that was ‘missed’ in the discussion….
APPENDIX IV: SAMPLE LETTERS OF INTRODUCTION AND CONSENT
To Whom It May Concern:

I am a graduate student in the Department of Geography at Queen’s University. I am conducting field research for my dissertation titled “Bringing Food Home: A Study on Household Access to Urban Food Markets in Accra, Ghana”. The overarching aim of this study is to provide a better understanding of the links between urban poverty, food security, and sustainable development and to explore strategies that are necessary to promote urban food security and sustainability.

I will be very grateful of you can assist me to collect information relating to my research from your organization. The information gathered from your organization will be kept strictly private and will not be used for any purpose other than the objectives of the research project, the results of which will be published in standard academic outlets such as books and journals, available to researchers, students, policy makers and the general public.

If you have any questions about this study please feel free to contact any of the following persons:

Dr. Barry Riddell, (Research Supervisor)
Department of Geography, Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada K7L 3N6

Prof. P.W.K. Yankson, (Head)
Department of Geography and Resource Development
University of Ghana, Legon

Counting on your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

Nathaniel D. Aguda.
1. This research is being conducted by Nathaniel Aguda, doctoral candidate at the Department of Geography, Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

2. The research is titled “Bringing Food Home: A Study on Household Access to Urban Food Markets in Accra, Ghana.” The overarching aim of this research project is to provide a better understanding of the links between urban poverty, food security, and sustainable development in Accra, and also to explore strategies that are necessary to promote urban food security and sustainability. As a part of the research, interviews will be conducted in which the participant will be asked to state their opinion on questions related to the topic under study.

3. You will be interviewed once and the interview is expected to last for not more than one hour.

4. There are no known physical, psychological, economic or social risks involved with the participation in the research.

5. Participation in the research project is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any point of time during the research for any reason you may deem fit. Should you withdraw from the research, all information collected from you will be removed completely from the results of the study.

6. There is no compulsion for you to answer a question/questions with which you are not comfortable.

7. This interview will be tape recorded for transcription with your permission.

8. Your name and identity will be concealed to ensure that your confidentiality is protected (unless you give explicit consent to be quoted), and the information in the form of raw data shall be kept safe and destroyed when the thesis is completed. If you are representing an organization, the anonymity of your organization will be guaranteed should you request it.

9. This research is part of the Ph.D dissertation that will be submitted to Queen’s University. The academic community and any other person interested in it shall have access to it through Queen’s University. The results may also be published in journals or in the form of a book at a later stage and can be thus available to the general public or as a secondary source for other researchers.
10. Any complaints or queries regarding the nature or manner of research can be forwarded to the following persons/bodies:

➢ Nathaniel Aguda, (Researcher)
  Department of Geography
  Queen’s University,
  Kingston, Ontario, Canada K7L 3N6

➢ Dr. Barry Riddell, (Supervisor)
  Department of Geography
  Queen’s University,
  Kingston, Ontario, Canada K7L 3N6

➢ Dr. Joan Stevenson, (GREB Chair)
  General Research Ethics Board,
  Queen’s University,
  Kingston, Ontario, Canada K7L 3N6

________________________
Nathaniel Aguda
(Researcher)

________________________
[NAME]
(Research Assistant)
Consent Form for Market/Household Surveys

Project Title: Bringing Food Home: A Study on Household Access to Urban Food Markets in Accra, Ghana

Participant No.: ____________________________________

Residential Neighbourhood: ___________________________________

1. I have read the Letter of Information and have had all questions regarding it answered to my satisfaction.

2. I am aware of the aims of this research project titled, “Bringing Food Home: A Study on Household Access to Urban Food Markets in Accra, Ghana” and the nature and extent of my involvement in the study.

3. I am aware that I can contact the researcher, his supervisor, or the chair of the General Research Ethics Board at Queen’s University, Kingston, Canada, regarding any complaints or queries with respect to the research.

4. I am aware that my participation is completely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the research at any point of time.

5. I am assured that the researcher shall protect the confidentiality of my identity by not using my name or any other identifying information in the research and keeping the raw data safely.

Please initial below indicate you have granted permission for this interview to be tape-recorded. (Leave blank if you do not want this interview to be tape-recorded).

________________

Please initial below to give explicit consent for your identity (or your organization) to be used in this research. (Leave blank if you do not want your identity to be used).

________________

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________
Letter of Information for Public/Private Sector Organizations

Dear Sir or Madam:

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in an interview for this study. This interview forms part of a study on urban poverty household food security in the city should not take more than an hour of your time. The overarching aim of this study is to provide a better understanding of the links between urban poverty, food security, and sustainable development and to explore strategies that are necessary to promote urban food security and sustainability. This project will focus specifically on how households in the various residential areas of the city meet their food needs and are adjusting to the changing nature of food supply and distribution in the city. This focus will enable me to explore the challenges and constraints that urban households face in purchasing sufficient food from the marketplace, the kinds of coping strategies people resort to when they are unable to purchase food from the marketplace, and the capability of urban food markets to keep pace with the increasing, complex, and diverse food needs of Accra.

This study is funded the International Development Research Centre, with ethic approval from Queen’s University. I am bound to follow the strict guidelines for ethical research conduct in order to ensure that no harm will come to any of the participants involved in this study. I wish to assure you, therefore, that your participation in this project is strictly voluntary. The public nature of your position means that it is not possible for me to present the results of this interview anonymously; however, you will not be identified in any written report without your express written consent. The information gathered during this session will be kept strictly private and will not be used for any purpose other than the objectives of the research project, the results of which will be published in standard academic outlets such as books and journals, available to researchers, students, policy makers and the general public.

I do not intend to ask questions that are offensive or unduly invasive, but you may refuse to answer any question with which you do not feel comfortable, and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time with no effect and to have any information about you removed from the study. The interview will be tape recorded in order to assist me in analysis of the information. Queen’s University guidelines require that the tapes, and other records of the interview, be stored in a secure place and destroyed once the project has been completed. Should you have any concerns, or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact either the research supervisor (Dr. Barry Riddell), the Chair of the Geography Department Research Ethics Board (Dr Brian Osborne), or the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board (Dr Joan Stevenson) at the following address:

Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada K7L 3N6

Thank you very much for your participation in this project. Your contribution is a very valuable one.

Yours sincerely,
Nathaniel Aguda
Consent Form for Public/Private Sector Organizations

Project Title: “Bringing Food Home: A Study on Household Access to Urban Food Markets in Accra, Ghana”

Organization:____________________________________

Position:_____________________________________

I have read the letter outlining the terms under which I am participating in the above project and I have had any questions answered. I understand that:

1. the purpose of the study is to analyse the links between urban poverty, food security, and sustainable development
2. the interview will be recorded confidentially and for research purposes only
3. my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time
4. the researcher has taken all precautions to ensure confidentiality
5. I am aware that I can contact the Research Supervisor, the Chair of the Geography Department Research Ethics Board, or the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board, with any question, concern or complaint I may have
6. I have been assured that reasonable steps have been taken to maintain privacy.

As an official representing my organization, I [agree / do not agree] to be identified in the final research report.

____________________________                        _______________________
(signature)       (date)