

Food environments in food security and nutrition in Solomon Islands

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Key messages

- The food environment (FE) includes the places and pathways through which people acquire and/or consume food, and the characteristics of those environments that influence food choices.
- FEs are a key determinant of food security and nutrition because they shape what food is available and accessible to consumers, as well as other characteristics such as the desirability or convenience of different foods that underpin food choices.
- FEs also provide good opportunities for interventions to include food security and nutrition.
- Recording the source of food in regular surveys such as household income and expenditure surveys (HIES) using this FE typology can provide crucial insights for targeting initiatives that aim to reduce malnutrition and associated non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

Context

Food environments in the Pacific

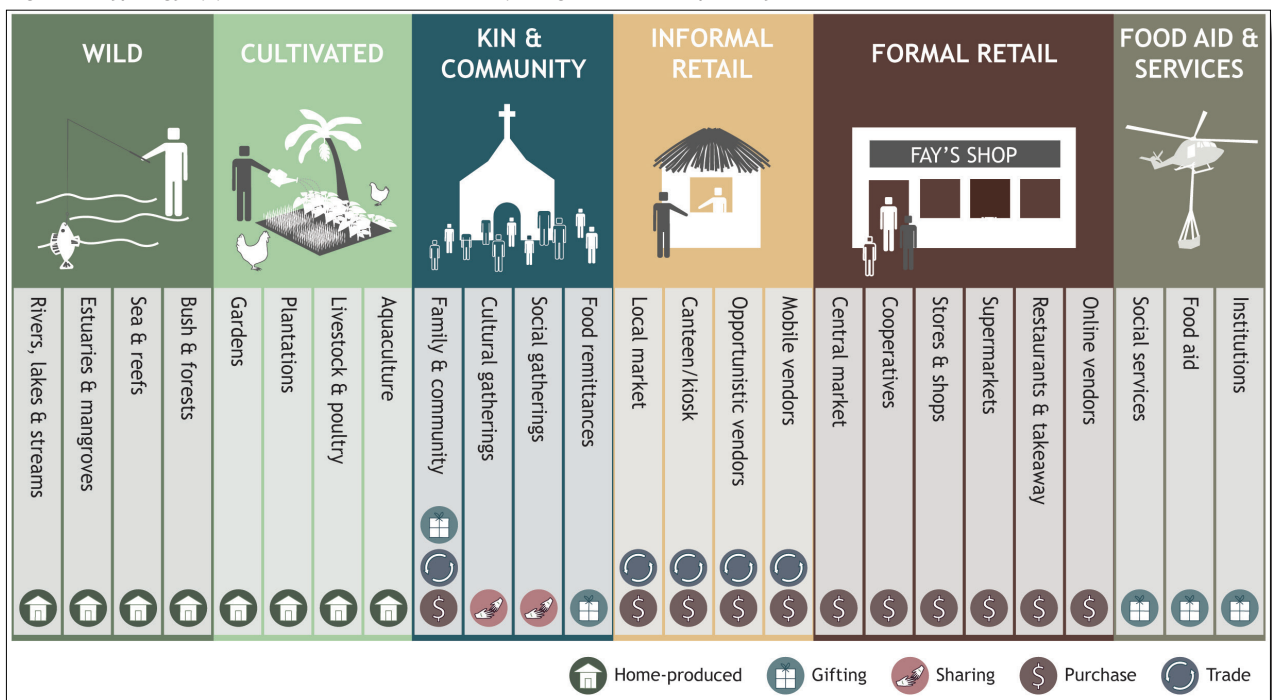
FEs in Solomon Islands are diverse and strongly embedded in the subsistence nature of local fisheries and agriculture as well as the important historic and cultural role of community and kinship networks. This typology shows six primary FEs and 25 subtypes commonly found in the nation and in the Pacific region. Wild FEs include foods harvested or collected from bush and forests, the sea, estuaries and mangroves, and rivers, lakes and streams. Cultivated FEs include gardens as well as more commercially oriented production systems such as livestock or aquaculture - but only when consumed directly by owners or employees from those production systems. The kin and community FE encompasses the network of social relationships through which people acquire food, including family and community members, cultural and social gatherings, and food remittances where food is sent between provinces or overseas.

Formal retail is differentiated from informal retail by the presence of formal governance structures such as licensing. Formal retail includes central markets in urban centres, supermarkets, shops, and stores. Informal retail includes local markets, canteens and mobile or opportunistic vendors. Food aid and social services includes provision of food from government or non-government organisations in response to acute or chronic food insecurity or as part of institutional food provision (e.g. boarding schools).

Contribution of food environments to healthy diets

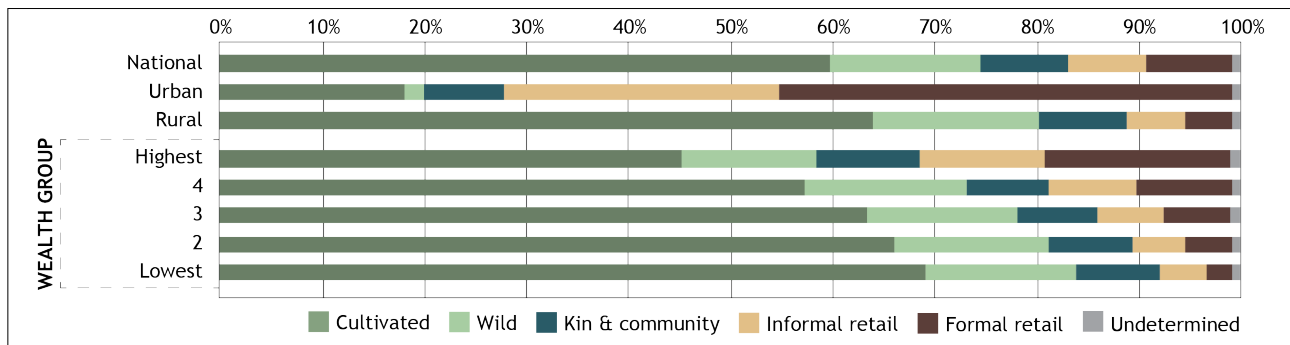
The cultivated FEs also provide an opportunity for improving food security and nutrition, providing 60 percent of all food nationally. This is followed by the wild FE (15 percent), kin and community (9 percent), and formal and informal retail FEs (8 percent each). Within retail FEs, central and local markets account for only 3 and 4 percent of all food acquired,

Figure 1. Typology of food environments in the Pacific region and their primary transaction mechanisms.



Source: Bogard, J. R., Andrew, N. L., Farrell, P., Herrero, M., Sharp, M. K. & Tutuo, J. 2021. A typology of food environments in the Pacific Region and their relationship to diet quality in Solomon Islands. *Foods*, 10, 2592. <https://doi.org/10.3390/foods10112592>

Figure 2. Proportion of total quantity of food acquired from different food environments in the Solomon Islands 2012-2013.



Source: Bogard, J. R., Andrew, N. L., Farrell, P., Herrero, M., Sharp, M. K. & Tutuo, J. 2021. A typology of food environments in the Pacific Region and their relationship to diet quality in Solomon Islands. *Foods*, 10, 2592. <https://doi.org/10.3390/foods10112592>

respectively. Urban households rely more heavily on retail FEs compared to rural, and poorer households rely more heavily on cultivated FEs than wealthy households. Different FEs also contribute to diet quality in different ways.

The cultivated FE provides the majority of roots and tubers (82 percent), fruits (73 percent) and vegetables (63 percent), and the wild FE provides the majority of fish and seafood (72 percent), and nuts (42 percent). In contrast, formal retail provides the majority of oils and fats (60 percent), breads and cereals (56 percent), meat (43 percent), and unhealthy junk food (43 percent). Kin and community plays a diverse role across several food groups as a source of meat (29 percent), breads and cereals (18 percent), unhealthy junk food (14 percent) and fish and seafood (12 percent).

Utility of the food environments typology

Greater knowledge of the contribution of FEs to diet quality, including how they vary throughout Solomon Islands and the region for different population groups, is crucial for informing the design of appropriate interventions and policies to reduce malnutrition and NCDs. When combined with data on food acquisition or consumption such as HIES surveys, this FE typology provides a framework for examining these relationships. Currently, HIES often record data on food acquisition according to purchases, home-produced, or gifted transactions. Expansion of these options to reflect a FE typology

would incur a small burden on data collection but create a wealth of data to understand where people source foods and therefore better inform interventions to improve diets.



Household garden in rural Solomon Islands growing coconut, banana, breadfruit, papaya, island cabbage, sugar cane and taro. © J. Bogard

References

Bogard, J. R., Andrew, N. L., Farrell, P., Herrero, M., Sharp, M. K. & Tutuo, J. 2021. A typology of food environments in the Pacific Region and their relationship to diet quality in Solomon Islands. *Foods*, 10, 2592. <https://doi.org/10.3390/foods10112592>.
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About

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