Characteristics of the Urban Food System in Epworth, Zimbabwe

No. 09 | 2019, February

GODEFREY TAWODZERA, EASTHER CHIGUMIRA, IDAH MBENGO, SAMUEL KUSANGAYA, OLIVER MANJENGWA AND DONALD CHIDEMBO

Series Editors:
Dr Jane Battersby,
Prof Vanessa Watson and
Dr Gareth Haysom
The Consuming Urban Poverty project (formally named the Governing Food Systems for Alleviating Poverty in Secondary Cities in Africa) argues that important contributions to debates on urbanization in sub-Saharan Africa, the nature of urban poverty, and the relationship between governance, poverty and the spatial characteristics of cities and towns in the region can be made through a focus on urban food systems and the dynamics of urban food poverty. There is a knowledge gap regarding secondary cities, their characteristics and governance, and yet these are important sites of urbanization in Africa. This project therefore focuses on secondary cities in three countries: Kisumu, Kenya; Kitwe, Zambia; and Epworth, Zimbabwe. The support of the Economic and Social Research Council (UK) and the UK Department for International Development is gratefully acknowledged. The project is funded under the ESRC-DFID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research (Grant Number ES/L008610/1).
Summary

Epworth provides a valuable case study for investigating urban food system dynamics. As a secondary city that serves as a labour pool to greater Harare, the food system dynamics of Epworth are also reflected in the capital. Also, Zimbabwe has encountered significant economic hardship over the past two decades, which has had a profound impact on how the economy operates. Understanding these operational dynamics offers useful insights into adaptation and mitigation strategies applied in the face of economic hardship. Central to the response strategy is the role played by food retailers in ensuring Epworth’s residents are able to access food. The state responds to instances of economic stress in various ways, and has adopted several statutory/policy instruments in an effort to regulate food trade and wider economic activities. The Epworth food system case study offers useful insights into how these macro-scale interventions impact at the local scale. Study findings revealed that Epworth’s food system is intertwined with that of Harare, and linked to regional and international markets through imports. Given the absence of major shopping sites in the area, the informal food sector makes important contributions to the food system. Although a wide variety of foods are sold in Epworth, non-nutritive foods such as sugared drinks and sweets were found to dominate retailers’ sales profiles, raising questions about the health impacts that are likely to result, especially the burden of non-communicable diseases. Overall, Epworth’s food system is dominated by small, informal players who provide a measure of service and food system access that is largely determined by factors outside their immediate control.

Keywords: urban food system, informal sector, non-nutritive foods, food access

Suggested citation: Tawodzera, Godfrey; Chigumira, Easther; Mbengo, Idah; Kusangaya, Samuel; Manjengwa, Oliver; and Chidembo, Donald (2019), Characteristics of the Urban Food System in Epworth, Zimbabwe, Consuming Urban Poverty Project Working Paper No. 9, African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town.
Table of Contents

1. Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1
2. Study area: Epworth ...................................................................................................... 1
   2.1 Demographic and historical context ......................................................................... 1
   2.2 Spatial urban growth dynamics .............................................................................. 2
3. Research methods ......................................................................................................... 4
   3.1 Retail mapping census .......................................................................................... 4
   3.2 Food retail survey .................................................................................................. 4
   3.3 Five-item survey ................................................................................................... 5
4. Research process .......................................................................................................... 5
   4.1 Sampling ............................................................................................................... 5
5. Results .......................................................................................................................... 6
   5.1 Gender and age characteristics .............................................................................. 6
   5.2 Education .............................................................................................................. 7
   5.3 Retail store ownership and management .................................................................. 7
6. Store location, spatial distribution and outlet typologies ............................................. 8
   6.1 Retail store location .............................................................................................. 8
   6.2 Spatial location .................................................................................................... 9
   6.3 Retail store typologies ........................................................................................ 10
   6.4 Retail store operation dynamics .......................................................................... 10
   6.5 Products sold by retail outlets ............................................................................. 11
7. Sources of food for retailers ......................................................................................... 13
   7.1 Maize .................................................................................................................. 14
   7.2 Rice ...................................................................................................................... 14
   7.3 Vegetables ........................................................................................................... 15
   7.4 Maputi ................................................................................................................ 15
   7.5 Offal ..................................................................................................................... 16
8. Retail store operating strategies ................................................................................... 16
9. Food retail business profitability and income generation .......................................... 17
10. Food retail regulation: licences and inspections ....................................................... 19
11. Food retailer challenges and perceived threats ......................................................... 20
12. Epworth food system governance ............................................................................. 21
   12.1 Policies ............................................................................................................. 21
   12.2 Laws, policies and strategies ............................................................................. 21
   12.3 Extra-governmental food governance ................................................................ 22
   12.4 Statutory instruments and food governance ....................................................... 22
13. Policy synthesis ........................................................................................................... 22
14. Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 23
References ....................................................................................................................... 24
1. Introduction

The Epworth food poverty working paper (see CUP Working Paper No. 8: Household Food Poverty in Epworth, Zimbabwe) indicated that diverse food retail purchasing strategies were being adopted by the residents of Epworth. Understanding food retail is the main purpose of this working paper: how the food retail environment enables food access, how it is governed, and the different options available.

Epworth provides a valuable case study for investigating urban food system dynamics for various reasons. The first is that, as a secondary city that serves as a labour pool to greater Harare, the food system dynamics of Epworth are also reflected in Harare. The satellite typology of Epworth is therefore important. Satellite cities are a common urban typology in southern Africa, but they have not been well studied. Secondly, Zimbabwe has encountered significant economic hardship over the past two decades, which has had a profound impact on how the economy operates. Understanding these operational dynamics offers useful insights into adaptation and mitigation strategies applied in the face of economic hardship. Central to the response strategy is the role played by food retailers in ensuring Epworth’s residents are able to access food. The state responds to instances of economic stress in various ways, and has adopted several statutory/policy instruments in an effort to regulate food trade and wider economic activities. The Epworth food system case study offers useful insights into how these macro-scale interventions impact at the local scale.

This working paper reflects on three inter-connected research activities that were carried out in order to better understand the Epworth food system and how food retail activities functioned in the city: a retail mapping census, followed by a survey of food retail outlets in Epworth, and, finally, a reverse value chain exercise where five key foods were studied from the point of retail to source.

The working paper begins with a contextual description of Epworth, its population size, gender dynamics, and other general characteristics of the site. Historical changes and the original reasons for the establishment of Epworth, and the role it played in the war of independence and later economic cycles, are outlined. This contextual framing is supported by a spatial review detailing land-use and other related changes in the area.

A thorough review of the research findings is provided, followed by further discussion on policy changes and their impact on the retailers engaged in the surveys. The working paper ends with policy- and development-related suggestions.

2. Study area: Epworth

2.1 Demographic and historical context

The Harare metropolitan area consists of four locales: Harare Urban, Harare Rural, Chitungwiza and Epworth (Figure 1). Epworth is located about 15 km to the east of the metropolitan area, which is home to about two million people (Zimstat, 2012). The settlement started in the late 19th century when the land was donated by Cecil John Rhodes to the Wesleyan Methodist Mission Trust (Rakodi, 1995). Epworth, which historically accommodated subsistence farmers, experienced increased immigration of refugees in the 1970s as a result of the intensification of the war of liberation in rural areas against the then colonial government.

In Harare’s metropolitan area, population increases and the effects of urbanisation were linked to growth management practices that influenced the way in which built-up areas were managed and could spread (Brunn, et al., 2003). According to Munzwa and Wellington (2010), the socio-economic policies and political expediency by both the colonial and independent governments have had significant impacts on the morphology (population distribution, structure and shape) of towns and cities in Zimbabwe. Epworth, is considered one of the poorest urban areas in Zimbabwe (Zimstat, 2016; Chirisa and Dumba, 2012). The population of Epworth has increased over time, as has the spatial dynamics of its urban food system and its impact on the poor. Epworth’s growth is linked to that of Harare. As Harare has expanded and the costs of land and housing have become high, poor households have moved outwards and into Epworth, where housing is largely informal and often more affordable, and where the absence of electricity and piped water in most of the area means that the overall costs of urban living are reduced.

Originally migrants originating from the surrounding rural areas, such as Seke and Goromonzi, settled in the area. Following independence, the removal of influx controls and regulations resulted in more people moving into Epworth from Harare and the surrounding rural areas (Patel, 1984). The church put no restrictions on movement and Epworth grew rapidly, especially towards the end of the war (Rakodi, 1995). The informal nature of the area provided an easy destination for new arrivals (Butcher, 1988). Given the increasing population, the Methodist Church transferred the settled land to the central government. In 1980, Epworth was home to 20 000 people, but by 2009 over 120 000 people had become residents (CSO, 1995, 2004; Zimstat, 2012). According to the 2012 census report, the area has a population of 167 462 inhabitants, and about 70% of the residents in Epworth live in informal conditions (Zimstat, 2012).

In 1986, the central government devolved the administration of Epworth to a local management entity, the Epworth Local Board (ELB)1 (Rakodi, 1995). The land that constitutes Epworth is state land, which is administered on behalf of the State by the ELB.

The area is divided into seven administrative wards, each with an elected councillor. Officially the wards are categorised numerically, from 1 to 7, but local residents refer to the wards by the names of the areas that roughly correspond to the wards: Munyuki (Ward 1), Zinyengere (Ward 2), Domboramwari (Ward 3), Stopover (Ward 4), Solani (Ward 5), Overspill (Ward 6) and MaGada (Ward 7). The ELB is responsible for coordinating development processes in the settlement and works in conjunction with Ward Development Committees (WDCs) at the local level. The WDCs consist of community representatives who are led by the ward councillor to spearhead development activities. Despite Epworth acquiring local government board status in 1986, the settlement has seen limited infrastructure development. To date it has just two tarred main feeder roads. Much of the town is linked by unnamed dust roads and paths, and most home-owners do not have title deeds, electricity or access to tap water (DSHZT, 2009).

Epworth is one of the poorest areas in the wider Harare metropolitan area. It has a poverty prevalence of 64.5% (Zimstat, 2015), a figure double that of Chitungwiza (35.5%) and Harare Urban (31.6%). The poverty rates in the area vary between wards, with Ward 4 having the least poverty prevalence at 62.5%. Approximately 78% of the households and 81% of individuals in Epworth live below the poverty datum line (Manjengwa, et al., 2014).

---

1 In terms of the Urban Councils Act 1984 [Cap. 29:15].
Given Epworth’s unique origins and its current hybrid governance structures that are adjacent and linked to Harare development processes, governed by a local board that reports to national government, the changes in spatial and land-use processes over time assist in understanding the context. The following section tracks land-use change, but aligns these changes to specific social and political shifts in Epworth, Harare and Zimbabwe more broadly.

### 2.2 Spatial urban growth dynamics

The spatial growth of Epworth is linked to the rapid expansion of Harare that has occurred since the late 1970s. Harare grew as increasing numbers of people moved into the city to take up non-agricultural employment, in addition to the natural population increase attributable to the growing resident population. In the years of economic hardship (the World Bank-driven Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) era), large numbers of people in Harare found it difficult to survive, and rents and rates in Harare became unaffordable. Some moved out of the city to neighbouring settlements such as Epworth, where rents were cheaper and rates lower or even non-existent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>(19)</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>+15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wetlands</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>(361)</td>
<td>+650</td>
<td>(168)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built up</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>+1 189</td>
<td>+1 748</td>
<td>+2 920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bare land</td>
<td>1 120</td>
<td>(504)</td>
<td>+962</td>
<td>(279)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetation</td>
<td>1 534</td>
<td>+1 565</td>
<td>(141)</td>
<td>(108)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 provides the actual changes from the 1976 baseline, based on remote sensing analysis of land-use and land-cover change. Between 1976 and 1995, the built-up area increased by 136%, and then expanded by 47% between 1996 and 2005, and by 67% between 2006 and 2015. As the built-up area expanded, there was a corresponding reduction in vegetation and wetlands. In terms of vegetation cover, the greatest reduction was a decline of 91% between 1995 and 2005. Epworth thus also grew rapidly in terms of its population. While Epworth’s physical boundaries have not changed much over the past 40 years, the open spaces in the area have drastically reduced and land use more broadly has changed. Figure 2 shows the spatial growth in built-up areas in Epworth from 1976 to 2015. The most significant growth occurred between 1976 and 1995 (late war of liberation and early independence periods) and 2005 to 2015 (cycles of economic hardship).
Figure 2: Epworth land-use and land-cover change (1976-2015) (Chidembo, 2017)

Figure 3: Epworth boundaries and wards

(Source: Alexander & Park Ross for CUP)
The first period of growth and land-use change is directly linked to Epworth’s founding, largely as a refugee settlement, followed by post-independence influx. The growth and land-use change in the second period (2005–2015) is linked to deteriorating economic conditions in the country in the post-2000 era: fast-track land redistribution and the subsequent economic meltdown. The final period can be attributed to Operation Murambatsvina – the government’s response to unplanned settlements and informal activities in greater Harare, where the greater proportion of newcomers to Epworth settled in the area known as Magada or Gada, in Ward 7 (Potts, 2006; Msindo, et al., 2013). The term magada (or gada) means ‘sitting’ or ‘settling’ and refers to the process wherein the people in the area settled themselves informally, without following housing standards.

Another reason for Epworth’s existence is that the ruling party tended to use the area as its political ‘backyard.’ When the ruling party began to lose its grip on urban areas in the post-2000 period, it tended to concentrate on the informal areas in the city where it dangled promises of housing to retain votes. Epworth was thus allowed to flourish and people began to build and settle in the area, albeit without access to proper services.

As Figures 2 and 3 show, the built-up areas were mainly concentrated to the north and west, which is roughly the area around Munyuki (Ward 1), Overspill (Ward 6) and Domboramwari (Ward 3). By 2015, however, the built-up areas had expanded across Epworth.

The absence of electricity (and other services) led to the rapid destruction of vegetation in the area through firewood collection. Large expanses of land were cleared and remained bare until houses were constructed there. The relationship between energy and food security will be discussed later in this working paper.

The physical and political changes in Epworth, and the manner in which governance arrangements have evolved, all have bearing on how Epworth functions today, how it is governed, and, most importantly for this working paper, the food system. While spatial and documentary analysis tools provide a historical account of the area’s development, other tools were needed to fully understand Epworth’s food system. Whereas Working Paper No. 8: Household Food Poverty in Epworth, Zimbabwe details the extent and nature of food poverty and insecurity in the area, this working paper examines the food system itself. Food poverty and the operations of the food system are interconnected, but are reported on here as discrete research entities for ease of argument and clarity.

3. Research methods

Urban households are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity and poverty because of their heavy dependence on food purchases (Tawodzera, et al., 2012). Since most of the food in Zimbabwe’s urban markets is imported, the urban population, particularly the poor, are generally vulnerable to external food shocks and rising food prices (Tawodzera, et al., 2012).

Working Paper No. 8: Household Food Poverty in Epworth, Zimbabwe provides details of the sources and frequency of access to food by Epworth’s residents. The working paper found that diverse food-access strategies were used to counter food insecurity, but despite these efforts, food insecurity remained high. Thus, it is important to understand the Epworth food system and to interrogate its operations, its governance and spatial distribution across the settlement.

This section details the data collection methods that were used. In order to examine and understand Epworth’s food system, three research components adopted: (1) a retail mapping census; (2) a retail survey; (3) a reverse value chain analysis of five key items consumed in the area. It was anticipated that the data would allow for an in-depth understanding of how the Epworth food system operates, what the important foods in Epworth are, where these foods are sourced, how and where they are traded, the price distortions that occur in the value chain, and how these affect access.

3.1 Retail mapping census

The retail mapping census enumerated and mapped food retail outlets that were identified as operational at the time of the survey. The exercise focused primarily on achieving the following: identifying and enumerating the various retail typologies in the area; ensuring effective coverage of all areas across the city; ensuring the inclusion of different trader profiles in terms of gender; and enquiring into the various food products sold.

The retail census mapped 1 607 food retail outlets, in the process collecting data on food retail outlet distribution, store typology and foods sold. This information was necessary to understand Epworth’s food system, especially which areas were better served and which retail types dominated different locations. The location of retail food outlets impacts on residents’ ability to access food, which is a key component of urban food security. As most of the food retail conducted in Epworth is undocumented, developing a sample for further survey-related analysis was a challenge; the ELB had minimal data on store typologies, and the number or locations of traders. Gleaning information from registration records was not an option as this excluded traders without licences and those who had subcontracted licences out to other traders. Instead, the data from the mapping exercise was used to generate the sample for the subsequent food retail survey.

The retail census does have limitations. For various safety, logistical and operational reasons, the census was conducted during daylight hours. As a result, retail trade activities that were conducted after 19h00 were not included in the census. Further, while every effort was taken to include all types of food trade, some house shops that were not immediately evident as places of food retail may have been overlooked. Finally, some stores were closed at the time of the census. If it could be confirmed (mostly via other retailers) that a store was a food trade store, it was included. However, if the nature of retail was unclear, the store was excluded from the census. As a result, all data presented here should be read with these limitations in mind, and as representative of the sample rather than the entire food retail community in the area.

3.2 Food retail survey

The survey took a broad view of food retail and deliberately chose not to pre-select respondents according to broader definitions of formal or informal. These considerations, aligned to definitions of what may constitute an informal trader, number of employees, licence status, time in trade, etc., were included in the questionnaire administered to food retailers. Given the importance of informal retail in the area and as a food access option for Epworth’s residents, understanding how food retail was governed was also something that the survey wished to establish. Questions were asked about licences and permits, and the means used to access these, including power relations and responses from ‘the state.’
3.3 Five-item survey

The reverse value chain analysis identified five key food items. The Epworth partners were asked to identify a key local food item for five pre-agreed categories. These categories included a key starch (rice); a key condiment (vegetables); a snack food or processed food item (maputi); a key protein source (offal); and a traditional food, even if a key staple (maize meal). The five-item survey tracked the multiple packaging and pricing processes that occurred back along the value chain, stopping either at the farm, lake or international source, or place where no further information was available. This reverse approach increased the probability of identifying more suppliers to the area than would have occurred in a traditional farm-to-fork value chain analysis, which ordinarily pre-selects well-known suppliers and tracks them forward to the consumer arena, often missing new, lesser known and unconventional supply-chain actors and even whole value chains.

4. Research process

A consultative process was applied in generating the various food retail surveys. Firstly, the different components of the survey were discussed and agreed at an initial stakeholder workshop attended by the core project members from all cities. Later, the typologies and specific food and legislative components of the survey were discussed at consultative workshops held in each city. These consultative workshops were attended by a broad group of stakeholders, including the city partner teams, the public and civil society participants. The survey was then formally designed and reviewed by each of the city partners. Following this review, changes were made to the language and framing of the questions. Context-specific food types, trading names, permit types, etc. were all included in the individual country surveys.

Following a number of changes to the surveys, the country partners convened a training session for prospective enumerators. With all changes made at the specific cities, caution was exercised to ensure that the questions that could provide some comparative opportunities among cities were only changed if the alterations were deemed to be completely necessary. The surveys were conducted using hand-held tablets and open source software.

On completion of the training, a pilot survey was conducted and, based on the feedback received, the questionnaire was corrected accordingly. Once these processes were completed, the formal survey commenced.

4.1 Sampling

Retail mapping involved extensive mapping of all the locations of food retail activities (formal and informal) and their spatial layout across the seven wards. A total of 1,607 retail outlets were identified in this mapping exercise (Figure 4).

The food retail survey involved carrying out an in-depth enquiry into retail outlet operations with a statistically determined representative sample from the 1,607 mapped retailers (in terms of gender, typology, distribution and product). The selection of sites for the retail survey and the five-item survey was done using purposive and cluster sampling methods. First, purposive sampling was used to determine the wards in which to conduct the retail survey. The strategy involved selecting wards that showed...
varying socio-economic and demographic characteristics, in order to understand the spatial characteristics of urban food systems across the different socio-economic classes. Selected wards needed to represent areas of high-, middle- and low-income households. Secondary data that aided in the selection of the three wards was obtained from the *Zimbabwe Poverty Atlas* (Zimstat, 2015). Ward 4, which is considered to have the lowest poverty prevalence in Epworth, represented high-income households; Ward 1, Epworth’s first planned settlement area, represented middle-income households; and Ward 7 the poorest households. Retail clusters within the wards were then chosen and purposive sampling was used to select retail shops that sold food. A total of 293 food retail outlets were included in the survey.

Together, the three different yet complimentary research methods produced a range of data on Epworth’s food retail system. This data is presented in the following sections.

## 5. Results

This section presents and analyses the findings of the Epworth food system study. Most modern urban food systems are generally characterised by modernised wholesale systems, capital-intensive food processing, state-of-the-art logistics, private branding, labelling (and packaging), modern retail and restaurants, and global integration (Tefft, et al., 2017). While Epworth’s food system is undoubtedly located within a modern and globalised food system, and is influenced by macro-level operations, the food-related processes at the local level are predominantly operating within the informal economy. Although informal food systems have traditionally been ignored or penalised by governments (Tacoli, 2016), the findings presented in this study demonstrate a robust and essential part of Epworth’s economy.

### 5.1 Gender and age characteristics

More than half of the food retail owners were female (52%), the dominance of which is not surprising in the Zimbabwean context. Chopamba (2010) and Wekwete (2005) argue that women traditionally dominate the retail trade in Zimbabwe, whether in the marketplace, on the streets, or on the premises of their compounds. This is largely because women were early entrants into the trade at a time when most men were, in the past and prior to the economic challenges, formally employed in industries. Although informal food systems have traditionally dominated the retail trade in Zimbabwe, whether in the marketplace, on the streets, or on the premises of their compounds. This is largely because women were early entrants into the trade at a time when most men were, in the past and prior to the economic challenges, formally employed in industries. The most recent national Labour Force Survey (LFS) (2014) indicates that this trend remains, particularly in the food service sector (Zimstat, 2014). While the deteriorating economic conditions during the ESAP years and in the post-2000 economic meltdown forced many people, even those who may have been employed formally, more women were already operating in the sector and had established their dominance (Njaya, 2015). Zimstat (2016), in its report on understanding equality in Zimbabwe, reports that women make up 62.1% of the wholesale and retail trade, further reinforcing the important role that women play in the sector.

![Figure 5: Store type by operator gender (n=264)](image-url)
Although all but one of the store typologies had both men and women operating them, different trade typologies do have a dominant gender operating different store types. Female operators dominate street vending, market stalls and tuck shops, whereas male operators appear to dominate grocery stores and grinding mills (Figure 5).

The predominant age group of the majority of retail traders in Epworth was 26–40 years (Figure 6). This was the case for both males and females in this age group, at 75% and 85% respectively. This is particularly important in Epworth, and Zimbabwe more broadly, given the limited employment opportunities in the formal sector.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age groups</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Older than 66</td>
<td>41 to 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 to 65</td>
<td>26 to 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 to 40</td>
<td>19 to 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 to 25</td>
<td>16 to 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: Retail store owners by gender and age (n=273). The age group 16-18 is included to assess the impact on poverty and school attendance.

5.2 Education

The informal retail sector in Zimbabwe has traditionally been dominated by people with low-level education, unable to find employment in the formal sector. In the late 1990s, statistics suggested that only 1.7% of traders had a full ordinary-level education (Mupedziswa and Gumbo, 1998). The results of this survey, however, show that the situation has changed. The majority of store owners in the sample were relatively well educated (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of education</th>
<th>n=</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma/trade qualification</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower secondary school</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior secondary school</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No education</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only 1.5% of the sample reported having no education at all. Some 50% of retail shop owners reported that they had a lower secondary level education, while 30% had attained senior secondary level. While the proliferation of well-educated people in the sample may generally reflect Zimbabwe’s higher levels of literacy, it also indicates the entrance of relatively educated people into informal food retail trade. According to Njaya (2015), the high levels of unemployment in Zimbabwe have pushed even the well-educated into the informal sector in order to survive. Over 5% of the sample reported having some level of tertiary qualification or skill. Industrial operations have contracted over years of economic decline and therefore no longer serve as sources of employment. Only the civil service remains a viable and stable employer; but with the perpetual economic hardships being experienced in the country, even the government has stopped employing. Those employed are paid sub-standard wages and often resort to a ‘second job’ in the informal sector to generate the necessary household income. Hence, the majority of people now survive through self-employment in areas such as the retail sector, as was found in Epworth.

5.3 Retail store ownership and management

The study sought to investigate the ownership of food retail stores in Epworth. Survey results indicate that the majority (62%) were single-owner shops, while family ownership constituted 22% (married couples) and 8% (siblings). Only a small proportion of the stores in the area were in the hands of multiple owners (2%) or partnerships (2%).

The survey revealed that there were variations in the periods of ownership, with close to half of the retail outlet owners (46%) indicating that they had owned their stores for between one and five years, and a quarter (24%) for less than a year (Figure 7). The generally shorter periods of ownership may be an indication of the unpredictable economic environment, where entrepreneurs open and/or close different types of businesses depending on demand and viability (Ndweni, et al., 2014). Competition among informal traders who sell the same product generally also results in some retailers closing down. It is not uncommon in the area...
to find a business person opening up a shop and closing it down within a year, only to start another store. Given the challenging trade, currency and product availability environments, decisions about the type of business or product to trade often depends on the prevailing economic and policy environment. It is worth noting that almost 30% of traders reported being in business for more than five years, with some being in business for over 20 years. This length of operation in the informal sector challenges some of the notions of opportunism or transitory approaches to informal food trade. Generalisations that informal traders are simply using this mode of trade as a stop-gap until better, more formal employment and income-generating opportunities arise requires further interrogation.

![Figure 7: Period of store operation (n=272)](image)

In Zimbabwe, most owners in the informal sector operate their own shops because they cannot afford to pay workers (Bukaliya and Aleck, 2012). The majority of the retail stores in Epworth were managed by their owners (81%). The country’s tough economic environment generally means that the majority of retail shops operate at just above break-even point, putting constraints on the ability to pay workers. In addition, most small-scale retail businesses are treated as the sole source of employment for the owners, and they will remain owner-operated and managed for as long as they do not make enough money to justify employing workers.

6. Store location, spatial distribution and outlet typologies

Epworth’s food retail environment is dominated by informal food retailers. However, even in a food system that is dominated by an informal food economy, location is important as it usually determines the ease or difficulty with which consumers access food (Wilson, et al., 2004). Location may also be a response to the wider urban environment that drives consumers’ purchasing patterns (Jago, et al., 2007). If households have limited storage facilities or refrigeration, for example, this would necessitate more regular and sometimes daily purchases.

6.1 Retail store location

While informal trade types and structures dominate the food trade environment, a high proportion of the retail stores in Epworth were located in markets in approved trading areas (38%), followed by stores on street edges (18%), mini mall/shopping precincts (11%), and stand-alone operations (10%). Retailers operating out of illegal markets constituted 11%, while 7.5% operated from their houses (Figure 8). Very few retailers operated from a mall (0.5%) as the only mall in Epworth is now derelict. Operators were asked to provide reasons for the siting of their particular stores. Slightly over one-third of retail stores (36%) were situated where they could take advantage of the opportunities offered by the locations. Such locations included those along roads, at intersections, or at shopping areas/precincts where the business could benefit from access to more customers.
In some instances locational advantages included being in close proximity to other businesses. Customers patronising one business could end up visiting other businesses close by to compare prices or to buy other products that may have been in short supply in the shops initial targeted by the customer. A quarter of the retail shops (25%) reported being located at places that were affordable. Affordability is a critical factor for location, particularly for small retail players who do not have much money for overheads. Wood and Browne (2006) argue that location costs are a central consideration for food retail businesses, where keeping overheads low is a priority. Some retail outlets chose their location according to economic considerations (15%), and the survey results indicate that the vast majority (91%) of retail stores were fixed, while only 6% were mobile and 3% were temporary as they were either cyclical or seasonally operated stores. The mobile outlets generally comprised traders who moved around the area selling vegetables, tomatoes, potatoes, maputi, fish and beans. While some of the traders used push-carts or bicycles, others traversed the area on foot in search of customers. There were a few traders who used open-backed vehicles (bakkies) to trade, driving around and periodically setting up station in areas that could be accessed by customers. The considerations of food retail entrepreneurs (of opportunities, economic costs and affordability) have a bearing on the spatial distribution of retail outlets that will be discussed in the next section.

6.2 Spatial location

Figure 4 detailed the spatial location of the mapped retail stores in Epworth. An analysis of the locations shows some general aspects that are key to Epworth’s food system. The first revolves around the dominance of street vendors and tuck shops. These informal food retail outlets are spread across all the wards. The dispersed spatial nature of street vending and tuck shops in Epworth also shows that food outlets are located within residential areas. Crush, et al. (2012), argue that residential areas provide the most convenient and easily accessible locations for poor urban households that have limited financial capacity to travel and shop at supermarkets that may be located far away.

The second aspect is the observation that, while meat is an important part of Epworth residents’ diet, there were only a few butcheries located in the area. This may be indicative of deepening poverty levels among residents, who cannot afford to purchase meat frequently. The few operational butcheries sold mostly beef and chicken offal, with many offering other protein options, like fish, which are cheap and more affordable for the poor.

The third aspect relates to street vending. The predominance of street vendors shows that street vending plays an important role in supplying food. Given the more traditional role of butcheries and the associated permitting regime in meat sales, finding that street traders are involved in selling offal was unexpected. Street vendors sell a diversity of food items, ranging from fruits, vegetables and meat to cooked foods such as sadza (a staple food made from maize meal and served with relish), braai meat (meat cooked on an open fire) and cooked beans. Foods are often broken down into smaller, more affordable portions (bulk breaking), commonly referred to as tsiona.

The fourth aspect involves the links that exist between retailers and wholesalers in Epworth. Street vendors often buy from butcheries in Epworth, treating them in much the same way as they do other wholesalers and then bulk breaking to sell on the street. This generally saves on transport costs to wholesalers in Harare.

The fifth aspect is that a large number of traders operate in areas that take advantage of daily commuters, locating their stores near sites where people access taxis. In Ward 7, however, the pattern differs as store location is mostly haphazard. This is because the ward has no proper roads or recognisable shopping centres, many activities in the area are not regulated, and trading is dominated by informal street vending.

The survey also enquired into the relationship between store locations and the places of residence of operators. Almost three-quarters (63%) of store owners either lived within walking distance of their shops, or at the store itself (11%). This lowers business costs as the entrepreneur minimises transport costs and can store goods. Living at the shop also enhances security. Operating a business from or close to home also provides flexibility, for example, in terms of child care.
6.3 Retail store typologies

The retail food outlets in Epworth were classified according to broadly defined trader typologies. The survey results indicate that street vendors (28%) were the most common forms of trader, followed by tuck shops (20%), market vendors (16%) and grocery stores (12%) (Figure 9). The high proportion of street vendors derives from the state of the economy in Epworth, which, besides the few shopping precincts discussed earlier, has minimal trading infrastructure. Other significant typologies included house shops (7%), tables at intersections (7%), grinding mills (3%) and mobile vendors (3%).

There were only a few wholesalers and superettes. As Epworth lies within Harare’s sphere of influence (only 15 km away), most of the traders requiring wholesale services travel to Harare to make their purchases. The few wholesalers operating in Epworth are expensive compared to those in Harare. Traders purchasing from Epworth-based wholesalers engage in a constant exercise of price comparison, judging whether the local price is still lower than the item price plus transport costs. The fact that some retailers make their purchases in Harare shows how the Epworth and Harare food systems are intertwined. Figure 9 reflects the different store typologies that were found in Epworth’s wards and highlights the dominance of street vending.

![Figure 9: Store typology (n=1603)]

6.4 Retail store operation dynamics

Access to food is not only dependent on residents’ ability to purchase food, but also when they can access the food. The study sought to find out how retail stores operated as this has an impact on what type of food is bought when. The survey results revealed that over 90% of retail stores in Epworth operate seven days of the week. Fewer retail shops operate on Sunday than other days of the week because it is considered a religious day.

In terms of operating times, the majority of retail stores opened between 06h00 and 08h00, when most people were purchasing their breakfast needs. Most shops (65%) reported closing between 19h00 and 21h00 as no additional benefits were derived by remaining open. Local by-laws also prohibit shops operating after 20h00. The busiest trading days were Saturday (72%), Sunday (61.5%) and Friday (52%). This was because industry employees are generally paid at the end of the week and most people are at home at a weekend. It is interesting to note that, although Sunday is the second busiest day, some retailers made a deliberate decision to not operate then. A further consideration, and one that speaks to generalisations about avoiding regulation, is that there appears to be compliance with by-law informed operating times.

The busiest months of the year for retailers was towards the end of the year: November (40%) and December (69%) (Figure 10). This is due to increased spending over the festive season. Thereafter, expenditure on food decreases and households struggle to put food on the table, having overspent during the preceding months. This is also linked to seasonal cycles in Zimbabwe (see Working Paper No. 8: Household Food Poverty in Epworth, Zimbabwe). April is also a busy month for food retailers because of increased spending at Easter.
The least busy trading months were January, February and March, which is when most people are focused on paying school fees and face a cash crisis. In Zimbabwe, the lean months are generally referred to as ‘January Disease’, with January being reported by 64% of traders as the worst trading month.

6.5 Products sold by retail outlets

Having analysed Epworth’s retail store dynamics, the study sought to examine the products sold. The notion of a sustainable and healthy food system rests, in part, on the products that are available and sold by retailers to their consumers. As the HLPE (2017) notes, consumer behaviour is shaped by the existing food environment, which includes what food is available where. Consumers cannot buy what is not there, even if they have the resources to do so. The survey results revealed that retail outlets in the area were selling the following key products: supplier-packed products (43%), vegetables (42%), non-food products (42%), self-packed items/bulk-broken items (37%), fresh food (34%), refrigerated food items (27%) and mixed foods (25%). Only a few retailers were trading traditional food items (18%).
or cooked/prepared foods (13%). In an urban environment, where diets are becoming increasingly westernised and a large proportion of foods are imported, the low number of retail outlets offering traditional foods is not surprising. The relatively small proportion of retailers selling refrigerated foods is an indicator of the challenge of accessing electricity, and is only generally evident in Ward 1, Ward 2, and the major shopping areas in the city. The products sold also speak to a wider infrastructure challenge. If there are inadequate store or other related facilities, such as refrigeration, it makes business sense to reduce one’s risk and sell only products that can be stored for extended periods. The costs of replenishing a store on a daily basis impact on price and, as a result, on business competitiveness and viability.

Survey results show that supplier-packed foods (foods that are not loose, but pre-packed in known sizes/weights) were sold by all retailer typologies (Figure 11). Grocery/general dealers had well-developed infrastructure and access to electricity, which enabled them to store large quantities of supplier-packed foods and frozen foods. In contrast, vendors and tuck shops dominate in self-packed products and mixed products that are not infrastructure dependent.

Deeper analysis of the actual foods sold within these broad categories indicates that the most commonly sold foods, when calculated as a percentage of total foods sold (n=8369), were sweets (47%), chips and crisps (47%), sugar (37%), oil and fats (36%) and sugared drinks (35.5%) (Figure 12). The majority of these foods are detrimental to health and high consumption may ultimately lead to lifestyle diseases such as diabetes and hypertension, as well as obesity and poor oral health (WHO, 2016). Rippe and Angelopoulos (2016) have argued that increased consumption of added sugars may also lead to cognitive decline, and in some cases cancers. There is also convincing evidence that sugar-sweetened beverages have no nutritional value and that their increased consumption is detrimental to health (Boylan and Milhrshahi, 2015).

Survey results show that supplier-packed foods (foods that are not loose, but pre-packed in known sizes/weights) were sold by all retailer typologies (Figure 11). Grocery/general dealers had well-developed infrastructure and access to electricity, which enabled them to store large quantities of supplier-packed foods and frozen foods. In contrast, vendors and tuck shops dominate in self-packed products and mixed products that are not infrastructure dependent.

Deeper analysis of the actual foods sold within these broad categories indicates that the most commonly sold foods, when calculated as a percentage of total foods sold (n=8369), were sweets (47%), chips and crisps (47%), sugar (37%), oil and fats (36%) and sugared drinks (35.5%) (Figure 12). The majority of these foods are detrimental to health and high consumption may ultimately lead to lifestyle diseases such as diabetes and hypertension, as well as obesity and poor oral health (WHO, 2016). Rippe and Angelopoulos (2016) have argued that increased consumption of added sugars may also lead to cognitive decline, and in some cases cancers. There is also convincing evidence that sugar-sweetened beverages have no nutritional value and that their increased consumption is detrimental to health (Boylan and Milhrshahi, 2015).

The food items sold align, in broad terms, with the reported food consumption detailed in Working Paper No. 8: Household Food Poverty in Epworth, Zimbabwe. However, in the 24-hour recall period, dry grains were reported as the main food consumed, although this item is not reported as frequently sold by all retailers (Figure 12). The reason for this is the prevalence of specialist stores, the grinding mills, and the ability to store grains, which may indicate different procurement cycles.
The study findings of the most-sold foods in Epworth are consistent with assertions made by Rimpkeekool, et al. (2017) that the diets of modernising traditional societies are changing from low-fat, cereal-based agrarian foods to industrially processed foods high in sodium and sugar. Thus, the consumption of non-nutritive foods in Epworth is indicative of a ‘nutrition transition’ with the potential to create significant health problems (particularly non-communicable diseases). In a poor area such as Epworth, the proliferation of disease will have catastrophic effects on a population least able to shoulder financial costs associated with poor health. Further research is required to understand the intersections between the food system and nutritional changes in Epworth. Other factors, such as past agricultural policies and economic incentives, also impact on the types of food that enter the system and how these are changing. This aspect also demands further research.

Few retail stores sold foods high in protein: fresh meat (13%), frozen meat (12%), fresh fish (10%) and live chickens (3%). While meat is considered an essential part of the Zimbabwean diet, the low percentage of shops selling different kinds of meat is an indication of the poverty endemic in the area, and is linked to the low consumption reported earlier. Most poor households in Epworth are unable to afford meat. The Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS) confirmed this, with only 28% of households reporting consuming meat in the 24-hour recall period and nearly two-thirds going without meat due to cost (see Working Paper No. 8: Household Food Poverty in Epworth, Zimbabwe). Over 20% of retail outlets indicated that they sold vegetables. It is worth noting that there are high levels of urban agriculture in Epworth, but not all of the produce is cultivated for re-sale. The major crops grown by households were maize (94%) and vegetables (58%). Maize is a staple crop used to make sadza, and vegetables are made into relish, making these particularly important food items for those who do not have enough money to buy substitutes. However, only 20% of those growing vegetables reported selling any of their crop. To a lesser extent, the low number of retail outlets selling meat may also reflect linkages between Epworth and Harare, and that people prefer to buy meat from butcheries in Harare because they are cheaper.

Although the retail stores in Epworth sell a range of foods, most concentrate on foods that are non-nutritive; healthy, nutritious foods are sold by only a few shops. To have a healthy and sustainable food system, one needs to look at how retailers can be encouraged to stock foods that are healthier for their customers. This provides a clear challenge. Most evidence suggests that, unless there is a seasonal abundance, nutritionally beneficial foods are generally more expensive, both at source and at the point of retail. Processed, low-nutrient foods are generally more affordable. Poor consumers face a real challenge between feeling satiated or consuming less but more nutritionally dense foods. The extent of food poverty is assessed in Working Paper No. 8: Household Food Poverty in Epworth, Zimbabwe, but consumers and retailers have to make strategic decisions about what to stock and purchase. These decisions are informed by multiple factors, with cost and affordability dominating choices in poor communities.

7. Sources of food for retailers

Having analysed the nature of food retailers and their products, it is imperative to discuss where and how retailers source the food they sell. Where key foods are sourced has implications for food availability and pricing, which ultimately affects consumer access. Food sources are integral to food systems. The viability of a food system is generally measured according to how it enables or impedes access. Whereas in urban areas accessibility hinges primarily on the individual’s or household’s ability to purchase foodstuffs, another component of food access is contingent upon where the food is sourced and retailled (Crush and Frayne, 2011). Swift and Hamilton (2001) argue that retail distribution systems are generally tilted in favour of high-income areas, where infrastructure and marketing systems are well established and functional. In contrast, network systems in low-income areas are poor, and food reaches these areas through informal rather than formal systems (Battersby and Crush, 2014). The reverse value chain analysis carried out in Epworth served not only to understand where food comes from, but also the changes in pricing that occur along the value chain that impact on economic access and, ultimately, on food poverty.

A further key consideration was position of power within the value chain. Some actors were price setters, while others were price takers. Understanding the power distribution within the food value chain is an essential component of responding to food insecurity, particularly in urban areas where food security is determined largely by access and stability, rather than availability. The value chains of five food items were reviewed from point of retail to source, or as close to source as possible. Most food system value chain assessments work from the source of food to the point of retail. The Consuming Urban Poverty (CUP) project worked from the perspective that the farm-to-fork approach was flawed and limited the scale of analysis, particularly around questions of power. Very few cities seek to trace how globalised their food systems may be. While some studies seek to understand material flows, this study sought to understand the inflow of goods rather than the origins of food, and the value chain considerations associated with this, particularly power dynamics. The farm-to-fork model often originates within a local food systems perspective where the primary focus is to connect local producers with local consumers. This perspective then generates information that reinforces two food/urban system perspectives. The first dogma broadly imagines secondary cities as urban centres embedded within productive agricultural environments with a symbiotic local food system. The second is that of a city regional food system, where the urban space is imagined to be embedded within and largely supplied by a local food shed. From a more practical point of view, if one were to ask a farmer where their food goes, the general response is to the closest market, often the city, thereby reinforcing both perspectives. The CUP project needed to test the underlying assumptions embedded within these perspectives on how cities feed themselves.

For the five-item review, partner cities were asked to identify a key staple, a key protein, a dominant vegetable (or group of vegetables), a snack food item and a traditional food item. It is acknowledged that these items do not represent the entire food system, but they do provide insights into the general food groups consumed by the residents of the research sites. Epworth respondents selected maize as the key staple, but as this was arguably a traditional food, also added rice. The vegetables selected included those used for relish: a collection of leafy greens, predominantly kale and spinach. The snack food was maputi, a local maize popcorn, and the protein was offal. While recognising the reduced consumption of meat and the ‘downscaling’ to motombo (small dried fish) due to costs, given the culturally appropriate and important considerations attributed to meat in Zimbabwe, the research team felt that offal would be the most appropriate protein reviewed.

The value chain review identified some general trends. One is that value chains are fluid, with food sourced from several places, including international suppliers within Southern Africa.
7.1 Maize

Maize is a staple crop in Zimbabwe and perhaps the most important because the maize meal derived from it is used to make sadza. The value chain for maize meal was particularly informing; most of the maize meal retailed in Epworth was imported from South Africa and Zambia (Figure 13). Although the government imports maize meal through the Grain Marketing Board (GMB), its role was minimal. The greater proportion of maize meal was imported by cross-border traders who then sold it to wholesalers. Most wholesalers in Harare were wary of direct importation because of the costs and bureaucracy surrounding import permits. However, cross-border traders were able to bring in small quantities that did not require permits or incur duties, often making numerous trips a month to keep wholesalers adequately supplied. The contribution of cross-border traders has therefore been significant. Small traders in Epworth also bought maize meal from wholesalers in Harare and repackaged it into the smaller quantities required by most of their customers, whose low incomes don’t enable them to purchase in bulk. In addition, the role of the informal food economy underlined the innovative ways in which poor consumers in Epworth responded to food-related challenges. For example, some consumers reverted to purchasing whole maize and milling it themselves instead of buying ready packaged maize meal from retail stores. Most maize meal purchases are made from informal traders, local grinding mills or chigayos, or from the market at Mbare Musika in Harare. This has had a moderating effect on prices as residents pay an average of USD7.00 (September 2017) for a 20 kg bag of milled maize meal instead of the USD10.00 it is sold for in retail shops. The small maize meal packages sold by vendors can be as low as one or two kilograms, priced at USD0.50 and USD1.00 respectively, enabling the poor to access food with the little money they have managed to raise.

7.2 Rice

Rice is another important food in the Zimbabwean diet. It is consumed for lunch or dinner, but also as a bread substitute in the morning. The rice value chain supply into Epworth was generally long, coming from South Africa, Mozambique, China, Vietnam and Singapore. The length of the rice value chain reaffirms the embedded nature of Epworth’s food system in the global and regional food system. The major players in the importation of rice were wholesalers, the government, and cross-border traders, indicating multiple entry points for rice into the country’s food system (Figure 14).

Zimbabwe imports close to 95% of its rice requirements, but the importation regulations are not as stringent as those for maize. The rice imported by government through the GMB was generally available in 50 kg bags, which were repackaged into smaller bags under the ‘Silo Brands’ label. The majority of traders purchased rice from wholesalers in Harare, where a 20 kg bag of rice cost, on average, USD18.50. A 2 kg packet of rice would then be traded for USD2.00 in retail shops and by street vendors. Parboiled rice imported from, but not grown in, South Africa was cheaper than other rice varieties, retailing at USD1.80 for two kilograms.

Although rice is an important staple for low-income households, it is not viewed as politically important, unlike maize. As a result there is less state control of price, storage and importation, and different actors are able to assert disproportionate power along the value chain, creating price volatility and product instability. The role of middle-men raises many questions and, while often seen as predatory and responsible for pushing up prices, requires further analysis. In Epworth, middle-men play a central role in price setting. However, they are essential conduits, bearing the risk of getting foods into the urban system.
Vegetables

Vegetables are integral to the diets of Epworth's residents as they are used to make a relish that is served with sadza. The most important vegetables are covo and rape (kale-type leafy greens). Although some residents grow vegetables, most of it is for their own consumption and not for sale. Vegetables traded in the area are mainly bought from Mbare Musika in Harare as Epworth does not have a market for farmers to deliver to. Mbare Musika is supplied by farmers from nearby Mazowe, Dema and Marondera, but also from Mutoko, which is some 140 km away. With the vegetable trade being driven externally from Mbare Musika, pricing is determined by market actors. Major players in the determination of vegetable prices are the middle-men (makoronyera) who control access for farmers and buyers. A bundle of vegetables at Mbare Musika costs, on average, between USD1.50 and USD2.00, depending on demand. In times of short supply, the cost can rise to USD3.00 per bundle. A round-trip from Epworth to Mbare Musika may cost a trader USD4.00, adding significantly to costs incurred, which are later passed on to consumers who have to pay USD0.10 for a few (5–7) vegetable leaves. In comparison, residents living in the poorer neighbourhoods around Mbare Musika pay the same amount for double the number of leaves. Thus, Epworth residents pay significantly higher prices, driven largely by added transport costs.

Maputi

Amid all of Epworth’s food challenges, an ‘innovation’ has arisen in the area in the form of the snack food maputi (a type of popped corn). It is generally packaged in 50–80 g packets that are sold along the roadside and at intersections by static and mobile vendors, but it is also sold in formal shops. Maputi is gaining popularity in Epworth and creating interesting value chain-related responses. Most households cannot afford three solid meals a day and often resort to consuming maputi to bridge the gap between meals. This relatively affordable product is rapidly replacing more traditional street foods, such as roasted maize, as its price has remained relatively constant for almost three years. Traditionally, most maputi sold in Epworth was processed in factories in Mbare, at Msasa Industrial Park, and in Chitungwiza. However, maputi is now being locally produced in Epworth (at Overspill, Chiremba, Solani and Reuben shopping sites) by many small-scale manufacturers using easily available production technology. The maputi producers sell their products at a wholesale price of USD0.55 per pack of 20. Each packet then retails at USD0.10. The value-chain for the finished maputi product is predominantly local, but the maize from which it is made follows similar value chains to those described above.

With many of the larger formal maputi producers ceasing operations (only one remains), production is almost exclusively occurring in the informal economy, underscoring the importance of the informal food economy to the overall food system of Epworth. Additionally, new informal businesses have emerged to support the local production of maputi, including branding and design businesses, packaging suppliers, and even maputi ‘gun’ manufacturers. The emergence of maputi in Epworth reflects a different form of nutrition transition – one that has emerged, not as a result of highly processed foods originating from developed countries, but through local innovations built on a specific food culture linked to culturally appropriate food types and significant cost reductions.
Mennell (1996) has documented the association between poverty and the consumption of offal. However, offal provides protein and iron that are essential for food security and therefore should not be viewed negatively. In Epworth, offal was available from both formal and informal food economies. There were, however, few butcheries in Epworth and offal trading was mainly undertaken by street traders and mobile vendors, who would move around the area with buckets.

Most offal is sourced by the Epworth-based butcheries from formal butcheries in Harare and then resold to informal traders, or purchased directly from specific meat suppliers in Harare. Ascertaining the source of the meat sold by the meat traders in Harare was more complex. Generally the formal meat sector does not keep account of this so-called ‘fifth quarter’. In the reverse value chain assessment, all offal sellers listed Harare meat suppliers as their source. In turn, the Harare meat suppliers indicated that they acquired their meat from local, nationally run abattoirs.

While offal is available at a low cost, the reverse value chain analysis in Epworth revealed that it was generally beyond the reach of many residents at between USD4.00 and USD5.50 per kilogram. However, it was still considerably cheaper than beef, which was trading between USD5.50 and USD7.00 per kilogram. Under Epworth’s stressed economic conditions, the food system was unable to supply residents with affordable foods necessary for a balanced diet.

The reverse value chain exercise found that different products had vastly different value chain dynamics. While this is obvious on reflection, generalisations about local food and local economies often gloss over these product-related specificities. Regional and economic considerations are also important, which was most evident in the maize and rice value chains, where cross-border and international trade co-exist and ensure a regular (or relatively regular) supply of these foods into the Epworth food system. Two findings in particular became apparent through this research activity: the first was the globalised nature of the Epworth food system, and the second was that formal and informal food systems merge at different times and in different ways, confirming the limitations of differentiating between formal and informal in food system debates and policy framings.

8. Retail store operating strategies

The retail environment in Epworth has many challenges, which requires retailers in the area to devise various survival strategies. One of these survival tactics involves offering credit to customers. Das (2015) argues that offering credit to consumers is a way of ensuring customer loyalty. In a competitive environment such as Epworth, where thousands of people have turned to the retail trade to make a living, the traders that survive do so by improvising and winning customers over their competitors. Survey results indicate that half the traders surveyed offered some form of credit. Almost one-third (32%) of the retailers offered credit as a deliberate and regular strategy, and a further 18% indicated that they sometimes offered credit. Those retailers offering credit did so for various reasons: to retain consumers (37%); to prevent people go hungry (22.5%), because the community is poor (17%), to attract business (16%), because it is culturally correct (10.5%), and because other retailers are offering credit (5%) (Figure 15). Some retailers believed that they could lose their customers to other retailers if they did not offer credit. It was revealed during the survey that some retailers offered credit even if it was not financially profitable, while others felt that they had no choice if they wanted their businesses to survive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for offering credit</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To retain customers</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is necessary as this is a poor community</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To attract business</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People will go hungry if no credit</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally appropriate thing to do</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other traders offer credit</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linked to community pay cycles</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is our corporate policy</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15: Retailers offering credit (multiple response) (n=276)
Offering credit is also a symptom of a depressed economy, where income is inconsistent and irregular. Since most Epworth residents rely on the informal economy and informal employment, their households have erratic income streams. This means that on some days households have cash to buy food, while on others they do not. Retailers understand this and offer credit to not only attract and retain customers, but also to ensure regular incomes, on a clear understanding of household cash flow cycles.

Credit was offered to regular customers (36%), known locals (18%), clients with a good credit record (18), and immediate family (12%) (Figure 16).

![Figure 16: Credit recipients (multiple response) (n=292)](image)

Offering credit to these customers was not an act of benevolence, but rather a strategy to cement a financial relationship with the customer. Beyond creating good relations, retailers also logically selected customers that deserved to be given credit on the basis of their trustworthiness (repaying the debt when they managed to get money). The greater proportion of retailers offering credit (94%) did not charge interest. The maximum credit amount offered was at the owner’s discretion (55%) or informed by client history (24%). Bad debt was generally not an issue, with 69% of those offering credit indicating that they lose less than 5% of their income in this way (Figure 17).

9. Food retail business profitability and income generation

Local neighbourhood food retailers are the most important conduit through which consumers in Epworth get their food supplies. Without them, the food system barely functions. Given the limited number of formal food retail outlets in Epworth, the importance of informal food traders increases. Thus, it was important to understand how these retailers perform and how profitable their businesses were. Woodward, et al. (2011) argue that the economic performance of small businesses, especially those in the informal sector, varies greatly, depending on the capitalisation and operation of the business, and the economic environment in which it operates. Relating specifically to the informal sector, Rogerson (1997) delineates two central categories of informal business: survivalist and entrepreneurial. He points out that

![Figure 17: Percentage of income lost through offering credit (n=131)](image)
survivalist businesses are those that generate minimal income for their owners, who are sometimes engaged in the business simply as a stop-gap measure and would abandon it for formal sector job opportunities. On the other hand, entrepreneurial business owners generally make substantial capital injections and re-invest profits, creating a higher probability of flourishing (Rogerson, 1997). That, however, can only happen if the business is generating enough income to sustain itself and enable investment, which is a challenge in Epworth given the broader economic conditions.

In Epworth, the business profitability depends on several factors, including foot traffic, business management, debt control, sales volumes and pricing. Other factors also influence profitability, but are often outside the direct control of the business, such as infrastructure stability, price consistency, and the community’s economic status. Given the food system focus, traders were asked to assess the profitability of different food items. While the impact on overall profitability is linked to far more than just the profitability of goods, understanding these factors provides useful insights into the nature of the food system and the dynamics associated with retail operations.

Figure 18 reflects the profitability of several items. The responses are subjective, but indicate the respondents’ views of food-type profitability. Further, given the distribution of the different types of foods sold, some food types reflect a far higher number of responses than others. As seen in Figure 18, the ability to add value to an item (e.g. cooking it) increases its profitability. Additionally, it is difficult to increase the prices of some foods as this may reduce the overall profitability of the items. Dry grains and dried fish, for example, have minimal price ceilings. It is perhaps also worth noting that the foods deemed to be the most profitable are seen as luxuries in Epworth. Thus, simply looking at the profitability of food items provides a useful lens to understand poverty in a community. From a retailer perspective, Figure 18 also reflects the volume of traders who sell different food types, with over 100 of the reviewed traders selling items such as sugar, crisps and sweets.

As discussed in previous sections, the majority of food retail outlets in Epworth operate within the informal food economy. The survey sought to assess the broader viability of informal food retail operations. However, given the nature of informal trade, there was obvious suspicion when questions were asked about income and other related financial matters. As such, responses need to be read in the context of a high likelihood of under-reporting. According to the survey responses, 39% of the operators reported that their retail outlets made up more than 75% of their monthly household income, while 15% derived 51−75% of their monthly income in this way (Figure 19). Only

![Figure 18: Profitability of food items (calculated per item)](image-url)
3% of the retail outlet owners reported that their businesses were not contributing to household costs. Clearly food retail is important to Epworth’s economy, but it should be noted that the income derived from retail outlets is not always sufficient to cover the needs of the owners and their families. This is confirmed by 86% of the retail outlet owners indicating that the income they derive from their food outlets is insufficient.

61% of the retailers surveyed held a licence to operate, with 2% reporting that they had applied for a licence and were waiting for it to be granted. While the figure of 61% was taken to be correct, given the sensitivity around licensing, where trust issues meant that some traders may have been uncertain whether the responses would be reported to the authorities, the enumerators then asked: If asked by the authorities, would you be able to show them that licence today? The responses to this question did not align with the reported permit holding response, with only 48% of traders confirming that they would be able to produce their licence. The enumerators did not ask to view the permit.

Importantly, 22% of respondents reported that they traded without a licence, with a further 15% responding that they did not need a trading licence to operate. In some instances this is partially correct, although not technically the case, specifically in the case of retailers who sub-let from other retailers who do hold licences. Some of the house shop respondents believed that they did not need a licence to operate as they were trading from their homes. In areas of Epworth where settlement has begun, albeit informally, and where there are no roads, traders also claimed that no licence was required.

The survey enquired into the nature of the operating licences held by respondents. Of those who reported trading with a licence (n=156), the majority (85%) held what they referred to as an operating permit. A further 12% held what they termed a permit. When asked where these licences were procured, the majority (85%) named the ELB, but 12% reported obtaining their licences from a ‘local custodian’, implying that other trader governance regimes are also active in the area. These alternative governance structures and the role of middle-men require further research, but this was not possible given the type of survey conducted.

The number of traders holding a health permit (35%) was much lower than those holding an operating permit, while an additional 35% reported that they did not need a health permit to operate. In some instances this is not applicable to their trading operations.

The majority of mobile vendors operating in the area did so on foot, by bicycle or, on rare occasions, in bakkies. These retailers were generally not paying any money to the ELB, except when their goods were confiscated. The study noted that poorer traders opted to go into mobile vending and street vending as they could not afford to pay the required fees to operate in designated market places. The perception among some of the retailers surveyed, especially market and stall vendors, was that they should not be required to pay for trading licences given the informal nature of Epworth.

Over one-third of traders (37%) did not hold an operating licence. With the high levels of policing in Zimbabwe, and the roles played by local security actors and the police in enforcing compliance, it was deemed necessary to enquire into the operating practices used to avoid fines and other penalties. Being mobile was not only a cost-related strategy, but also one specifically used to avoid inspections. Some traders paid bribes to middle-men who agreed to protect their stalls from being demolished by the municipal police. Making bribe payments to government officials was also a clear strategy (Figure 20).

Only 38% of the sampled retailers indicated that their stores were inspected regularly, while 21% were inspected infrequently. Of those who reported regular inspections, there was a disproportionate proportion of inspections of stores of a more permanent nature, specifically butcheries, grinding mills, tuck shops and general dealers. The same disproportionate inspection dynamic was

10. Food retail regulation: licences and inspections

Across Zimbabwe, food retail outlets are required to hold a number of licences and permits to operate within the law. A trader selling food is required to hold a trading licence (supplied by trader-related authorities), and a health certificate for the store or retail area (supplied by the health authorities and informed by inspection). In addition, a person selling food must hold a health clearance certificate (supplied by a doctor). A further trading permit may be needed if trading takes place in a designated market area. Each permit is acquired through different sources, valid for different periods and issued for a fee. Traders also pay rent to other traders, such as a food seller trading outside an on-consumption liquor outlet. In terms of both cost and time, acquiring the permissions to conduct business restricts business viability, and their cost is often more punitive than fines for non-compliance or paying bribes. In Epworth, the ELB is responsible for issuing retailer operating licences or permits.

The survey first asked respondents if they held a licence to operate. This was a general term used to denote the trading licence required for the specific area in which the retailer operated. If a trader was working from a designated stall in an official market area, all that may have been required is a daily permit. If a retailer operates from a formal structure (bricks and mortar, with a fixed roof), a different type of operating licence is required. The purpose of the survey was to understand compliance with permit regulations, and not the different types of permits held. It was found that

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No income</th>
<th>Less than 25%</th>
<th>25–50%</th>
<th>51–75%</th>
<th>More than 75%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 19: Proportion of household total monthly income derived from retail outlet (n=212)
reported for those who reported being inspected infrequently. Most inspections were reported to take place monthly (33%), while random inspections were high at 21%. Not all stores were inspected and 33% of respondents reported that they had never been inspected.

To avoid inspections and, therefore, avoid paying for licences, 11% indicated that they paid bribes; 10% moved around as mobile vendors, making it difficult for municipal police to apprehend them; and 2% reported paying protection money. Without prompting, the respondents clarified the role played by middle-men: they made sure that the traders would not be arrested, or, if they were, they were released early without any repercussions.

Knowledge of the responsible inspection bodies varied. A total of 360 different inspection option responses were provided by the 273 traders who traded with a licence. The majority of retailers (n=160) indicated that the local municipality was responsible for inspections, while 66 respondents thought that the police also had a responsibility, and 45 respondents indicated health officials. A few traders thought that other national bodies, such as the revenue service, or government departments were responsible for inspections.

The blame for the absence of licences was attributed to the local authority, with most retail owners revealing that the licensing process was challenging and the costs prohibitive, in some cases as high as USD50.00. Legally, stores should be inspected to check their compliance with established standards. While it was revealed that stores were generally inspected by the local municipality, police, health officials and revenue services, a quarter of the respondents reported that their stores had never been inspected.

Financial concerns resonated throughout the survey, and was the constant variable threatening the viability and sustainability of retail outlets. The majority of retailers are self-financed; some used their own business cash flow, while others used family loans. They also reported never having been able to source support from the state or from formal financial institutions. Thus, self-financing was ranked as the number one threat by the retailers, followed by competition from other stores and supply constraints. Issues of crime and harassment by police and non-police actors were also considered significant threats. Another threat was poor or no infrastructure. The absence of electricity was a dominant issue, with retailers having to provide their own energy, often in the form of a generator. A lack of access to and/or the need to spend limited resources on energy meant that traders had to orientate their businesses around these limitations. A further infrastructure-related challenge was the absence of water and sanitation facilities. For a food retailer, this severely limits what and how one trades. These two limitations combine to influence the type of product sold and could be a key driver in the sale of non-perishable goods, particularly sugar-sweetened beverages and packaged crisps, and other foods with little nutrient value (Figure 21).

11. Food retailer challenges and perceived threats

Retail trade in Epworth is faced with significant infrastructure challenges. Only 38% of the food retail stores in Epworth were operating in designated and authorised locations. The majority of traders were operating either at home, on street edges, or in other undesignated trading points. As such, they were subjected to harassment by local municipal security, national police and even organised local protection schemes. Retailers trading from informal structures felt insecure as the structures could be demolished at any time by the council or on the instruction of central government, as occurred during Operation Murambatsvina in 2005. Retailers self-finance their operations and have no financial support from government or banks. At the time of the survey, the situation was made worse by a cash shortage in the Zimbabwean economy and the introduction of Zimbabwean bond coins. Up until then, retailers traded in US Dollars, but small change was often given in South African Rand.
12. Epworth food system governance

12.1 Policies

In earlier sections of this working paper, it has been shown that Epworth’s food system is intertwined with broader national, regional and global food-governance structures and policies. As such, the laws and regulations operating at these different scales affect and sometimes impinge on the area’s food system. At the national level, Zimbabwe’s Constitution encapsulates the right to food and food security through Sections 15 and 77, mandating the State to encourage people to grow, store and secure adequate food reserves, and to take reasonable measures to ensure food security (GOZ, 2013a). In 2013, the government went a step further by launching a National Food and Nutrition Security Policy, whose goal is to ensure adequate food and nutrition security in the country (GOZ, 2013b). An implementation framework, the National Nutrition Strategy (2014–2018), has also been crafted to operationalise the policy. However the policy and its ensuing strategy focuses primarily on food availability, without sufficiently engaging other critical dimensions of food security (food access, utilisation and stability), which are critical to food security in the urban area. Further to this, the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (GOZ, 2013c), although having components that focus on food through its Food Security and Nutrition Cluster, envisages the improvement of food security in the country through increased production. Thus, in a national sense, Zimbabwe does not have a policy that is geared to or articulated adequately to cater for the specific food needs of its urban population, let alone the urban poor in Epworth and others areas of urban poverty.

12.2 Laws, policies and strategies

Dictates of good governance at the local scale are such that laws and regulations emerge from and are guided by national imperatives. It is therefore not surprising that the absence of clearly defined policies on urban food security negatively impacts Epworth's food system. Epworth does not have an overarching food security policy. Its food system is mainly guided by the Regional Town and Country Planning (RTCP) and Urban Councils Acts. Both Acts are inadequate as they do not take into consideration the informal sector, which, as has been discussed, is a critical component of the area’s food system. As Chirisa and Dumba (2012) point out, the Acts only provide for mono-functionally zoned urban forms, which do not take into account mixed land-use patterns and the growing informal sector. Although businesses are supposed to be consulted on development and issues relating to their operations in the area, the RTCP Act requires that only land owners with title deeds and retailers with licences be consulted in the planning process (Machakaire and Tapela, 2016). Hence, informal food sector actors are not consulted in by-law development and market area planning. The urban poor, the majority of whom operate in the informal food sector, are therefore denied the right to shape the governance structures of the area in which they operate. Further, the ELB's Strategic Plan (2016–2020) is underpinned by a desire to formalise and regulate trade and land-use planning, which runs counter to the largely informal nature of the area. By-laws enacted by the ELB thus do little to facilitate the informal food economy and impinge on the area’s food system operations. Borrowing from the Public Health Act and the Food Standards Act, which govern food at the national level, the ELB enacts and enforces by-laws that constrain the vending of cooked foods, and restricts what and where different types of foods may be sold in the area. The enforcement of laws that are blind to the reality of the area serves only to distort and disorganise its food system. The informal food economy is not only a critical component of the local food system, but also a key livelihood strategy (Manjengwa, et al., 2012). The majority of Epworth residents access food through the informal food economy, where bulk breaking and credit facilities increase the poor’s accessibility to food. The current position, where local authorities and their by-laws continue to exclude and criminalise the informal food economy, is untenable, as it exacerbates poverty and impinges on the smooth functioning of the local food system.
12.3 Extra-governmental food governance

In most cities, municipalities are assumed to be in control of the area under their authority. The municipality has laws and regulations which they can legitimately enforce as tools of control and governance. However, there are always parallel structures and other actors operating in areas, some known to the state, but others unseen. In some areas these actors hold the balance of power, hence the term ‘extra-governmental governance’, but the roles they play are generally blurred, illegal and mostly extortionate. Extra-governmental forms of food governance refer to the authority (institutions, regulatory bodies, cartels) and power relations that determine how financial, material and human resources are distributed along the food value chain (Matondi and Chikulo, 2012). Actors emerge in spaces where governance vacuums exist, and exercise various modes of power at different scales (Lindell, 2008). The informal food economy, which is dominant in Epworth, is fertile ground for such contestations, where actors set and enforce rules under which other actors in the value chain operate or benefit (Matondi and Chikulo, 2012). This CUP study showed that the governance of Epworth’s food system, outside of the state and council, is influenced by gatekeepers (makoronyera) and marshals (mahwindi). Gatekeepers exercise their power by charging a protection fee to vendors who do not possess certification to operate legally. According to trader interviews, they protect vendors from council raids and sometimes supply insider information on when such raids will occur. The Epworth environment, where 39% of those operating in food retail are unlicensed, creates fertile ground for extortionist tendencies. Shortages in the challenging Zimbabwean macro-economic environment also strengthens the role of middle-men as food commodities move through many hands in the value chain before reaching the consumer. These middle-men contribute to high food-price volatility, especially for fresh fruit and vegetables, which tends to curb the ability of the poor to access food at reasonable prices. Prices are often hiked beyond the reach of many. Sometimes the makoronyera operate as cartels, fixing prices and often intimidating farmers to sell at low prices and retailers to buy at high prices. Such price-fixing hits the poor hardest as vendors pass on price increases to the end-consumer. While women dominate the retail trade in Epworth, they often struggle to access fresh fruit and vegetable markets due to the presence of makoronyera and mahwindi. In some cases, they are forced to buy fruits and vegetables at high prices, drastically diminishing their profit margins. In Epworth, food provisioning and governance is subject to various power relations that distort the market (and therefore the food system), which results in some foods being costly and periodically inaccessible.

12.4 Statutory instruments and food governance

Similar to other urban areas in Zimbabwe, Epworth’s food system has been affected by various statutory instruments implemented by the national government. Although not explicitly about food, a number of economic instruments introduced by the national government have profoundly impacted the food system at national and local levels. One of these statutory instruments has centred on dollarising the economy, which has made local production expensive. The devaluation of the South African Rand has made South African-produced food cheaper and, therefore, more attractive to the local market. Thus, most retail shops and informal markets in Epworth trade in South African Rand has made South African-produced food cheaper and, led to food shortages. The local industry that was earmarked to improve did not do so, further worsening the availability of food on the market. Additionally, some local manufacturers took advantage of the restricted imports scenario to hike their prices. Thus Epworth, like most other parts of the country, was negatively affected by this instrument.

The third instrument was Statutory Instrument 20 of 2017. Gazetteed in February 2017, it imposed 15% value added tax (VAT) on rice, margarine, fish, potatoes and meat products such as offal. The net effect increased the prices of these products to unaffordable levels. Although the instrument was repealed seven days later, due to consumer protest, most retailers in Epworth did not reduce their prices. In Epworth, the introduction of VAT increased the price of meat (including offal) by between USD1.00 and USD2.00 per kilogram. Beef liver, which sold at USD4.50 per kilogram in July 2016, increased to between USD5.50 and USD6.50 per kilogram in February 2017. Such increases had devastating effects on the urban poor, most of whom stopped buying meat, which impacted negatively on household food security and nutrition.

The fourth significant policy change was the introduction in 2016 of a surrogate currency (bond notes) tradable only in Zimbabwe. The move was aimed at overcoming liquidity challenges emerging in the dollarised economy. The ‘bond effect’ has been twofold: first, it created a black market for the US Dollar, which was required to import goods, and, secondly, it increased transaction costs which then also increased the price of goods. Although the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) decreed that the bond currency should trade on a par with the USD, traders demanded a 10–50% premium on products bought using the surrogate currency (Nyamunda, 2017). Without hard cash, most consumers in the country generally resorted to using debit cards. However, this was not the case in Epworth as most traders in the area are informal and do not possess point-of-sale machines or bank-connected debit-card facilities for such transactions. Consumers wanting to transact by card were forced to travel to Harare supermarkets for their purchases, thus increasing travel costs. Epworth’s food system has suffered considerably through the introduction and implementation of these policies.

13. Policy synthesis

Epworth’s urban population is increasing rapidly. Throughout the country’s tough economic times, spanning close to two decades, Epworth has experienced considerable growth compared to other urban areas, primarily due to the semi-formal nature of the area. People who are unable to meet their housing and rates bills in other parts of Harare have found refuge in the area. The challenges in the area have thus been compounded as the population has increased at a rate that the local authority has been unable to absorb and plan for. In a bid to bring Epworth to the same infrastructural development level as other urban areas in Zimbabwe, the ELB has put in place a strategic plan to improve the area. Bound by national legislation, the majority of by-laws do not match the reality of the largely informal food economy that exists in Epworth, and the current approach criminalises and penalises critical components of the area’s food system.
While the challenges resulting from rapid urbanisation necessitate proper planning and reforms, new approaches are needed that take into consideration the reality on the ground rather than an idealistic vision of a modern city. A transition towards sustainable food systems in the area requires a paradigm shift on the role of the informal food sector and how it can be harnessed to complement the formal sector. City by-laws should therefore be adapted to align with the changing circumstances, and accommodate street-based economic activities (food vending) and informality in the food system. Such reforms could reduce the detrimental and constractive role of middle-men in the food system, and curb corruption linked to the enforcement of by-laws. The reforms could also reduce exploitation along the food value chain and create value for consumers. There are many cities in developing and developed countries that are already engaging in transformative governance systems that embrace food security in their planning blueprints. An opportunity now exists for Epworth and other urban areas to build on the momentum of recent international initiatives to integrate all critical players in the food system at the local level. The approach of the local authority should be one that engages with urban spaces as multi-functional and multi-layered, and supports inclusive participation by a range of stakeholders (Kusakabe, 2006; Njaya, 2015).

The necessity of re-orienting production-based food programmes to food system and specifically food access programmes, is more than urgent. The local planning authority must look at the food system holistically and create an environment that enables a healthy and sustainable food system to flourish.

14. Conclusion

This paper sought to examine Epworth's food system through its retail trade, taking particular interest in the nature of retailing in the area, the location of retailers, the foods they sell, the major food sources, how changes along the value chain enabled or impeded access, and how these shaped the food system.

Study findings revealed that Epworth’s food system is intertwined with that of Harare, and linked to regional and international markets through imports. Given the absence of major shopping sites in the area, the informal food sector makes important contributions to the food system. Although a wide variety of foods are sold in Epworth, non-nutritive foods such as sugared drinks and sweets were found to dominate retailers’ sales profiles, raising questions about the health impacts that are likely to result, especially the burden of non-communicable diseases. Overall, Epworth’s food system is dominated by small, informal players who provide a measure of service and food system access that is largely determined by factors outside their immediate control.

The survey found that traders at permanent operating sites and areas generally sought to comply with legislation, but a large proportion of food retailers chose to adopt trading typologies that were directly aligned to their choice not to register and gain a formal permit. The reason for this was not necessarily a deliberate decision to break the law, but rather a choice informed by necessity and the economic constraints of this particular group of ‘non-compliant’ retailers. While the ELB is attempting to manage the area’s development, economic hardship and the lack of employment more generally mean that food retail serves two essential roles: firstly, it is a livelihood generating option, and, secondly, it is a food-security enabler as the trade responds to the immediate needs and budgets of Epworth households.

The absence of formal infrastructure in Epworth also influences the type of trade that takes place. This relates not only to how residents use the food system, but also its nature and form. Given the lack of electrification, households often need to purchase perishable foods on a regular basis, requiring short and frequent trips to food retail stores. The Epworth food system responds to this need. From a retailer perspective, the absence of electricity and formal retail infrastructure means that they are indirectly forced to adopt a more informal manner of trading. These two mutually dependant drivers of informal food retail in Epworth are often lost on those in authority that envisage more modern, ‘developed’ city and food retail typologies.

This review offers useful insights into the Epworth food system, and the broader economic and developmental challenges faced by residents. It also points to the inter-connected nature of Epworth and Harare; in the wider typology of a satellite secondary African city, both sites are linked with flows of food, resources and labour. This presents a very different type of relationship to that of networked secondary cities, such as Kisumu, located far from the primary city but on a transport route, or of an extractive secondary city, such as Kitwe, whose economy is still directly connected to a single extractive industry, in this case copper. This differentiation is important in terms of how Africa’s urbanisation trajectory is understood. Secondary cities are expected to grow faster and to be the sites of the greatest proportion of Africa’s urbanisation over the next 50 years. Being able to add nuance to how this urbanisation is understood is important, and using food as a lens to open up new areas of enquiry offers great utility.

CUP-related reading and resources

Epworth-related policy briefs


Consuming Urban Poverty project books

Urban Food Systems Governance and Poverty in African Cities https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9781351751353

Tomatoes & Taxi Ranks: Running our cities to fill the food gap http://www.tomatoesandtaxiranks.org.za

CUP website https://consumingurbanpoverty.wordpress.com
References


