

## Improving Access to Traditional Foods Through Innovation: Enhancing Resilient Food Systems

Vikelwa Judith Nomnga<sup>a</sup>

\* Corresponding author:

Email: [vnomnga@wsu.ac.za](mailto:vnomnga@wsu.ac.za)


a. Department of Hospitality, Tourism, and Sport Management. Faculty of Management & Public Administration Sciences. Walter Sisulu University. East London, South Africa.

### Article Info

Received: June 18, 2024

Accepted: September 10, 2024

Published: December 25, 2024

 10.46303/jcve.2024.49

### How to cite

Nomnga, V. J. (2024). Improving Access to Traditional Foods Through Innovation: Enhancing Resilient Food Systems. *Journal of Culture and Values in Education*, 7(4), 211-225.

<https://doi.org/10.46303/jcve.2024.49>

### Copyright license

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.

### ABSTRACT

Food insecurity is a global concern. There is an upsurge in hunger hotspots due to several shocks and stress such as economic shocks, weather and climatic shocks as well as conflict and wars. This adverse situation necessitates the establishment of resilient food systems. The key to resilient food systems is access to traditional foods. Lately, the consumption of traditional foods has dropped as access to these foods has been decreasing. Therefore, this research investigates improving access to traditional foods through enhancing resilient food systems. Qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews from purposively selected participants showed that the structuring and utilisation of educational programmes on traditional foods can be an innovative solution that improves access to traditional foods. The use of online platforms to promote, avail and connect people to traditional foods can also enhance access. The study recommends the utilization of educational programmes that promote access to online platforms that are inexpensive for accessing traditional foods, exclusive or traditional foods convenient or corner stores and specialization in production, supply and distribution.

### KEYWORDS

Food insecurity; food systems; processed foods; innovation; resilient; traditional foods.

## INTRODUCTION

Food insecurity is a global concern. World Food Programme (WFP) and Food Agricultural Organisation (FAO) (2024) warn of the acute global food insecurity with variations in different regions as some territories are going to experience further deterioration. WFP and FAO (2024) note that there are several hunger hotspots which are emerging due to economic shocks, organised violence and conflict, extreme weather and climate variability. Given the rise of several hunger hotspots in different regions of the world, food insecurity has become an urgent issue that needs to be addressed as part of attaining the Sustainable Development Goals. Stray Dog Institute (2022) mentions that responses to international hunger have in the past fallen short of guaranteeing universal, robust access to nutritious and healthful food. Inevitably, building resilient food systems is now one way to address the food crisis concern because they can provide healthy options as well as withstand various shocks and stressors such as famines while conserving cultural heritage and fostering sustainable development. In hunger hotspots such as some peri-urban regions in Africa which frequently experience different shocks, the establishment of resilient food systems has become imperative.

Dumont et al. (2022) aver that food systems are regarded as resilient when they do not only ensure food security but nutrition for everyone, leading to social, environmental, and economic sustainability. Resilient food systems are also described as food systems, together with their components at numerous levels, have the capability over a certain period to offer adequate, appropriate, and accessible food to everyone in the event of numerous and even unanticipated disruptions (Constas et al., 2021). Furthermore, a resilient food system is capable of withstanding and recovering from disturbances in a manner that ensures adequate provision of acceptable and accessible food for everyone (Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, 2023). Fundamentally, resilient food systems can endure short and long-term stresses and shocks such as severe weather incidents and natural disasters (Harris & Spiegel, 2019; Hertel et al., 2023). Resilient food systems are also self-regulating, diverse, adaptive, integrated, equitable and inclusive (HLPE, 2024). Dumont et al. (2022) also add that resilient food systems are supposed to address issues of inequity and negative attitudes, power and social relations, increasing context-based solutions among other things. Based on these descriptions, this study considers food systems to be resilient when they are more able to endure and recover from shocks at the same time remaining nutritious, socially meaningful, affordable, available and accessible to all.

Food systems are complicated because they encompass different food systems. These food systems are categorically divided into modern highly processed foods and traditional foods. The distinction between the categories in the contemporary food systems can be unclear. However, highly processed modern foods also known as ultra-processed foods are prepared and readily available foods as well as beverages that utilise surplus sugars, saturated fat or sodium in the diet (Panahi et al., 2022) and consist of predominantly junk foods and fast food from restaurants (Nyarko & Bartelmes, 2024). Fardet and Rock (2019) contend that highly processed

foods are not just “junk foods” but also foods advertised as healthy, such as vegan, light gluten-free, products or organic. Even though there is increasing food availability and accessibility, the causal relationship between the eating of highly processed foods and non-communicable diseases such as liver and coronary heart disease, obesity, type 2 diabetes and cancer, has been well-established (Nyarko & Bartelmes, 2024). Explaining more on the concerns regarding highly processed foods, Carson and Boege (2020) found that exorbitant prices of highly processed foods are associated with a higher risk of food insecurity and lack of transport to go to food outlets can impede food security. Additionally, highly processed foods are regarded as lacking social (nutrition and cultural) and environmental (biodiversity) value (Garcia et al., 2023; Leite et al., 2022). Fundamentally, there are some concerns with modern highly processed foods regarding their contribution to resilient food systems.

In contrast, traditional foods are considered to contribute towards social (nutrition and cultural), environmental (biological diversity and eco-friendly) and economic (cheaper production) significance (FAO & INRAE, 2020; Marrero & Mattei, 2022). Traditional foods are foods that have been passed down from one generation to the next about the skills, methods, or procedures utilized in their creation or in the selection and application of the raw material, which is typically local, as well as the culture that generates it (Rocillo-Aquino et al., 2021). Traditional foods are crucial for resilient food systems. Indigenous and traditional food crops are utilised for multiple functions within society, and most remarkably have a significant role to play in ensuring diversify the food to improve food system resilience (Akinola et al., 2020). Traditional foods are also regarded as resilient to shocks such as climate change (Marrero & Mattei, 2022). Lugo-Morin and Bhat (2022) also posit that traditional food can help to overcome emergencies of food insecurity such as droughts and famines or unprecedented incidences such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, traditional foods are regarded as foods that have historical, cultural as well as geographical identity (Dogan & Simsekli, 2015). Galanakis (2019) also adds that traditional foods contribute to diversification, development and sustainability in many areas especially rural areas, permitting a clear product distinction for their producers and manufacturers, offering a wider food variation to final consumers, guaranteeing income for locals, and ultimately safeguarding them from depopulation. Traditional foods have potentially improved the development of resilient food systems, especially in areas that encounter food insecurity.

However, different studies (Chopera et al., 2022; Elliott et al., 2012; Grann, Carlsson & Mansfield-Brown, 2023) have found that there is a low consumption of traditional foods. Robin et al. (2021) point out that lack of access to traditional food has been linked to low consumption of traditional foods and higher levels of poverty as well as food insecurity for Indigenous peoples. Galanakis (2019) adds that there is a lack of innovation in accessing traditional foods. Despite being significant to resilient food systems, access to traditional foods is gradually becoming limited due to the easy availability and accessibility of highly processed foods (Marrero & Mattei, 2022; Pereira et al., 2022). In developing resilient food systems there is a

need to find innovative ways to ensure access to traditional foods. Therefore, it is in this context that this research focuses on investigating the innovation that can be utilised to improve access to traditional foods.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The study utilised a qualitative research approach to get perceptions regarding the innovation that can help improve access to traditional foods. A cross-sectional research design with purposive sampling as a procedure that could select participants with rich knowledge regarding traditional foods and a contemporary peri-urban setting. This study specifically targeted participants living in a peri-urban area because they matched specific elements that are suitable for this investigation. These elements were knowledge about traditional foods, innovative access to modern highly processed foods and they also experienced food insecurity concerns. Additionally, the study targeted both women and men of all ages above eighteen years old. It was important to select both young and old participants because the younger participants have rich knowledge about modern cuisines as well as innovation used to access these foods, and the older participants have rich knowledge about traditional foods and how they were accessed. The study used semi-structured interviews to collect data from the participants. The interview guide was structured with the main aim of obtaining qualitative data for the study. An ethical clearance to conduct the study was obtained from the University of South Africa Research Ethics Committee. The researcher adhered to the ethical conduct required when conducting scientific research. Informed consent was sought by allowing participants to sign an informed consent form before conducting interviews and audio recording the interviews. The other ethical guidelines such as ensuring voluntary participation, anonymity, confidentiality and no harm to participants were also observed.

The study collected qualitative data which were analysed through thematic analysis. The researcher ensured data trustworthiness by adhering to ethical considerations, using a robust and appropriate research design, transparent reporting, peer review, use of reliable sources, and disclosure on conflict of interest.

### **Study participants**

The recruitment of participants for the study was done at Nompumelelo township a peri-urban location in East London in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. A total of 40 participants (n=40) were purposive selected for this study. The researcher selected participants who reside in Nompumelelo township and have knowledge about traditional foods. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews at locations that were convenient for the participants. The researcher recruited the participants from various places such as convenience stores (spazas), visiting houses and leisure areas. The participants did not receive any form of payment as the researcher explained to them that the study was used for academic and knowledge generation purposes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study uses thematic analysis as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2022). The main themes that were identified from the processed data as important for improving access to traditional foods were source of traditional foods, procedures for accessing traditional foods, marketing and advertising of traditional foods, distribution of traditional foods, storage of traditional foods, barriers to accessing traditional foods and innovative solutions to accessing traditional foods. The discussion outlines how these areas can influence access to traditional foods.

### Source of traditional foods

The first question focused on understanding the sources of traditional foods. This study found that the main sources of traditional foods are rural areas and sometimes local farmers. The response by one of the female participants who is 45 years old stated:

*“For us, we get our traditional food, such as umxoxozi (African melon), isigwamba (amaranthus and maize meal), umdokwe (sorghum flour porridge) and umxhafele (wild vegetables or pumpkin leaves mixed with maize), from elalini (rural areas). We are only able to get those foods when there is money to go to the rural areas”* (Participant 12).

Another participant, a 61-year-old male, who had a slightly different view but provided more insight into the aspect of traditional food sources said this:

*“We usually buy traditional food from local farmers who sell their farm produce which is produced at their farms. I sometimes go to the rural areas and as an old man, I cannot produce my food. Even if I wanted to, I do not have adequate land and resources to produce food. I must pay for water here unlike when I am in the rural areas where you can fetch water from a river nearby. I also feel sorry for the younger generation that will end up not knowing about some of our foods”* (Participant 5).

The excerpts above show that the main sources of traditional foods for some of the people in peri-urban communities are rural areas and local farmers. The sources of traditional foods are not immediately available to the communities as they are not within their proximity. Carson and Boege (2020) assert that there is always a concern over the location of food sources as the requirement of transport limits access to food. The sources of traditional foods in this study are located away from the residential location of the participants which implies mobility affects access to the food. Consequently, there is the issue of mobility which incorporates considering distance and reliable transportation as major factors when accessing traditional foods from main sources for people who are residing in a peri-urban area of Nompumelelo township. This complication of having reliable transport which is associated with attaining traditional foods from main sources presents a challenge in the establishment of resilient food systems in such a peri-urban area.

### Procedures for traditional foods

The other question asked in the study was about aspects that contribute to accessing traditional foods. The study found that the introduction and utilization of procedures can be a key aspect in accessing traditional foods. The responses from the participants highlighted that these

procedures can be introduced in production, processing, packaging and distribution. One participant a younger female age 27 years old expressed this view:

*“I think the production and processing of traditional foods can be changed in specialization. We can have certain areas known for producing special types of traditional food. Then in the process, they can make the packaging bigger to allow bulk buying of those foods. I also think the transport that collects the food should be from the community. This way the food will become easily accessible for us who cannot visit local farmers or rural areas frequently”* (Participant 3).

Another supporting view from another female participant who is 37 years old voiced that:

*“How traditional foods are accessed is incredibly challenging. It starts with someone having to go to rural areas or look for a local farmer from which they can buy. Most of the time it is buying small quantities or carrying small quantities from the rural areas. That means we need a system that can ensure a constant supply of traditional foods to ensure easy access. There is a need for bulky supply”* (Participant 17).

From the quotations above, the participants point to the innovation of procedures being key in accessing traditional foods. The findings suggest specialization as a notable change that can be made when producing traditional foods. During the production of traditional foods, producers are supposed to focus on producing specific foodstuffs in bulk. The wholesale packaging will be needed to ensure enormous quantities reach a lot of people in the peri-urban area. The use of bulk stockings is supposed to increase access to traditional foods. Furthermore, the findings reveal that the distribution and transportation of traditional foods must consist of large packages to ensure adequate availability and access. Dumont et al. (2022) state that resilient food systems are supposed to address issues of inequity and negative attitudes, power and social relations, increasing context-based solutions among other things. Considering this study’s findings, a change in procedure can ensure a change in attitudes towards traditional foods and context-specific solutions that help the peri-urban residents who are facing food insecurity concerns. Therefore, the supply after procedure changes must meet the constant frequency of every consumption for traditional foods to have any significant contribution towards the development of resilient food systems.

### **Marketing of traditional foods**

The other aspect that was raised regarding key changes that can ensure access to traditional foods was marketing and advertising. The participants pointed out that much of the access starts with how the traditional foods are served. Therefore, there is a need to make sure that there are innovative cost-effective ways of marketing and advertising traditional foods as foods with significant value in the establishment of resilient food systems. A participant who is 54 years male shared an insightful sentiment on this aspect of marketing and advertising by stating that:

*“I think an area that is important to ensure that more people consume and get access to traditional foods is marketing and advertising the good elements of these foods. The ways*

*of telling people about traditional foods must be relatable to the youth especially that way they can have an interest in producing or looking for those foods. I think we can use convenient shops such as spazas that sell traditional foods mainly or only” (Participant 2)*

Adding to this view, a 25-year-old female participant mentioned that:

*“We need to let traditional foods become fashionable that is how we increase access. I think we can try online platforms and make use of promotional events. This way there can be more people that participate in the production and distribution of traditional foods” (Participant 11).*

The responses highlight the probable innovation that can add to the access to traditional foods. The marketing and advertisement of traditional foods can be restructured to accommodate modern mechanisms that increase visibility and participation in the production, distribution and consumption of traditional foods. Several studies (Chopera et al., 2022 Elliott et al., 2012; Grann et al., 2023) have found that there is a low consumption of traditional foods implying lately there is generally less marketing placed on traditional foods. The study findings show that this transformation can increase access by ensuring more people get to know, understand and relate to traditional foods. This improvement in the marketing and advertising component can help to improve the establishment of resilient food systems.

### **Availability of traditional foods**

The research also asked about the last time they had consumed traditional foods and an explanation of the answer on the frequency. The participants mentioned that they were not sure a long time ago. The main reason for this limited frequency of consumption is the unavailability of traditional foods. The participants feel that an improvement in the availability of traditional foods can be useful in the frequency of consumption. The main ways to improve availability are through organising programmes or workshops that promote knowledge about traditional foods in peri-urban areas and introducing convenient shops (spazas) for traditional foods. A male participant aged 29 years old remarked that:

*“We rarely eat traditional foods in our home. Why? Because we do not have traditional foods it is hard to get traditional foods when you live in a township. Who has time to produce traditional food, and on what land? But I know the importance of traditional food especially for our health and medicinal purposes. It is therefore vital to ensure that there is something like a workshop or something that can instruct people about these (traditional) foods” (Participant 3).*

In the same vein, another female participant aged 22 years old claimed that:

*“I am no longer sure, honestly, it has been years. We hard eat traditional foods. They are good but where can you get them? If they were sold in a spaza then we would eat them (traditional foods) often” (Participant 16).*

From the remarks of these participants, the aspect of improving availability in innovative ways can help with access to traditional foods. The participants showed that they do not have traditional foods that are easily available to them because of their residential location. The peri-

urban area does not have readily available traditional foods for purchase. Moreover, the residents do not have time to produce traditional foods. The results also show that lack of land and knowledge to produce traditional foods affect availability. The innovation of targeted workshops, educational programmes, documentation, and implementation of knowledge for the creation of a system that will ensure the continued availability of traditional foods. There is also a need to have food spaces in the form of convenience shops or corner stores that stock and sell traditional foods. The availability of traditional foods is key to ensuring access as highlighted by the participants. Nyarko and Bartelmes (2024) indicate the significance of food availability in ensuring access. Therefore, the creation of resilient food systems must consider innovative ways that can improve the availability of traditional foods.

### **Storage of traditional foods**

The participants also indicated the component of storage of traditional foods as an element that can improve access to traditional foods. The participants were asked a question regarding what makes them choose to buy highly processed foods over traditional foods. Even though the availability aspect was mentioned a lot in the interviews, the participants also highlighted the issue of storage. Highly processed foods are more likely to have lengthier preservation due to the preservatives that are added to the foods and, therefore, have better storage aspects. The participants mentioned that there is a need for more innovative ways that will allow traditional foods to last a bit longer so that the storage aspect improves. A 35-year-old female participant retorted that:

*“The issue that makes it difficult sometimes to have traditional foods is the issue of some foods not having preservatives which imply they are likely to go bad. Modern foods have preservatives. Not that I want the traditional foods to be processed, no, I just want creative innovative ways to preserve the food so that we can store it longer. Fermentation must be done well but there is limited knowledge now regarding that (fermentation)”* (Participant 7).

The other view that added insight on this issue was provided by a male participant aged 23 years old. The participant reiterated that:

*“The issue of storage is concerning. Yes, traditional foods hardly go bad when they are fresh, but they are not canned or pasteurized, therefore, sometimes it is hard to store them for long”* (Participant 4).

The excerpts above show that there is a problem of storage regarding traditional foods which limits access to traditional foods. The peri-urban residents cannot afford to buy food all the time. They buy food and store it. The inability to store traditional foods makes it difficult to regularly access those foods. The participants indicated a need to improve the aspect of storage without affecting the nutritional contribution of traditional foods which is significant for resilient food systems. Rocillo-Aquino et al. (2021) contend that traditional foods contain raw materials that do not go through high levels of processing, likely to affect modern forms of storage. Therefore, the storage of traditional foods requires innovation to allow better storage.



**Barriers to accessing traditional foods.**

The study also asked about the barriers to accessing traditional foods. The study found some of the barriers to accessing traditional foods include lack of land for production in peri-urban areas, lack of knowledge and skills, lack of interest, financial constraints, easy access to modern highly processed foods, lack of technology as well as poor supply and distribution. A male participant aged 48 years old shared some views regarding what they consider barriers to accessing traditional foods:

*“There are several issues that are making people not eat traditional foods. One of the key issues is the lack of land for some of us who live in an area like this (peri-urban). Also, there is no more knowledge and skills to produce traditional foods, especially among the young able-bodied who live in the town area. I also think lack of money to buy traditional foods as they are expensive when you find them or have to use money to go buy them”* (Participant 8).

Another female participant aged 23 years old with similar sentiments expressed this:

*“I think the barriers to accessing traditional foods are having tastier modern foods. Honestly, who wants to eat foods like umdokwe when you can eat Russians (sausages)? I also talk about getting the traditional foods that are not available online, cannot find them in every store or convenience store. There are little supplies when you get them (traditional foods)”* (Participant 6).

The barriers to accessing traditional foods include land unavailability, financial resources constraints, lack of knowledge and skills, lack of interest, lack of technology, easy availability and access to highly processed foods and poor supply and distribution. The peri-urban areas do not have cheap and vast land such as that available in rural areas. This lack of land forces residents in peri-urban areas to abandon or practice limited farming. Therefore, the production of traditional foods is hindered by a lack of land to practice agricultural activities. These peri-urban dwellers are left with limited options for obtaining traditional foods. The options include travelling to rural areas or to local farmers to buy traditional foods. These options involve some financial costs which might be too high for people who have other financial needs such as paying for children’s school fees, electricity, water, rentals and clothing. These financial commitments make it difficult for the residents to pay for a trip to go and buy traditional foods elsewhere. Furthermore, the lack of knowledge and skills regarding traditional foods inhibits the peri-urban residents from accessing traditional foods. There is a loss of knowledge and skills regarding production, preparation and types of traditional foods. Due to this loss of knowledge and skills, there is an inability not only to produce the food but also to buy it as some people do not know how to prepare them.

Access to traditional foods is also hindered by a lack of interest and preference for highly processed foods. The people in peri-urban areas are exposed to highly processed foods daily. Consequently, these people find these highly processed foods more palatable than traditional ones. The ripple effect of this situation is less interest in traditional foods. Therefore, there is

less effort directed at accessing traditional foods. Traditional foods are also not accessible because of the lack of technology in attaining traditional foods. Traditional foods are not easily available on food applications such as Mr Delivery. There is no technology utilized to advertise and market traditional foods in the same manner as highly processed foods. Therefore, access to traditional foods is reduced because of the unavailability of modern platforms that can constantly and easily supply people with traditional foods.

Additionally, traditional food access is limited due to the easy availability and accessibility of highly processed foods. Highly processed foods are easily obtainable in retail shops, fast foods, corner shops and online platforms. This situation implies that there is no attention and effort directed towards obtaining traditional foods. This finding supports the assertion by Galanakis (2019) who asserts that there is a lack of innovation in accessing traditional foods. This lack of advanced change further makes it less likely for people to consider traditional foods as constant food for their diets. Access to traditional foods is also hindered by poor supply and distribution. There is no constant and adequate supply of traditional foods in peri-urban areas such as Nompumelelo township. The supply will have to ensure that there is daily visibility, availability and access to traditional foods.

#### **Innovative solutions to accessing traditional foods.**

The study also asked participants to suggest innovative solutions which can assist with improving access to traditional foods. A suggestion that was raised includes traditional food educational programmes targeting areas like peri-urban areas that are food insecure and have concerning levels of poverty. Another suggestion that was proposed in this study was the utilization of convenience stores that exclusively or mainly sell traditional foods. The other innovation necessary is better advertising and marketing of traditional foods. A female participant aged 34 years old responded by saying that:

*“I feel there is a need to ensure better knowledge equipping activities that help especially youth know and understand traditional foods. Better packaging to make traditional foods more appealing and informative to people. There is also a need to promote a shop that will sell traditional foods only” (Participant 21).*

The participant's response reveals the main suggestions regarding the innovative solutions which can improve access to traditional foods. The use of educational programmes can improve access by encouraging the transfer of tacit knowledge regarding traditional food production, preparation, preservation and consumption. The educational programmes will ensure there is more awareness about traditional foods, meaning more people can produce, acquire or store traditional foods. Additionally, the use of convenience or corner stores that exclusively or predominantly sell traditional foods can increase access for those in peri-urban areas who do not have adequate financial resources to travel to get traditional foods. Convenient shops will provide easy availability and access to traditional foods. The use of packaging can also improve access to lure those who are uninterested and those who do not know about traditional foods. This packaging can be accompanied by non-expensive marketing

and advertising such as the use of social media. The use of these innovative methods in a cost-effective manner can enable appropriate access to traditional food for all. Conostas et al. (2021) argue that resilient food systems offer adequate, appropriate and accessible food to everyone, in the event of numerous and even unanticipated disruptions. Implementing these innovative changes can help access traditional foods for all.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The study aimed to understand the innovation that can be utilised to improve access to traditional foods to ensure resilient food systems. The study findings revealed that any innovation that could help improve access to traditional foods in a peri-urban area must consider land issues, financial constraints, lack of knowledge, skills, lack of interest including availability and access to high supply and distribution. The establishment of resilient food systems requires available, affordable and accessible foods. The study revealed further that traditional foods are important hence the need to establish resilient food systems that have social, health, economic and environmental value. The study conclusions indicated the need to improve access to traditional foods through structuring and utilising educational programmes that raise awareness on traditional foods, utilization of exclusive or traditional foods convenience stores, online presence through inexpensive methods and specialization in production, supply and distribution.

The structuring and utilisation of educational programmes about traditional foods will improve access by highlighting the nutritional, cultural and environmental value of traditional foods. This knowledge will generate and increase interest, preference, and ability to produce and prepare. The increased knowledge will facilitate the shift from occasional consumption of traditional foods to routine consumption as demand increases. Knowledge will also assist with the sharing of traditional foods among social groups such as relatives, friends, and church members among others.

The study also concludes that access to traditional foods can be improved through the utilization of exclusive or traditional foods convenience or corner stores that allow people to conveniently buy traditional foods. When traditional foods are more visible and easily available their access also improves. Convenience stores can even store season traditional foods which would have been preserved through methods such as fermentation, drying and smoking. Convenient stores can ensure that ready-to-eat packs are available which increases access and consumption. Convenience stores can ensure there is variety in inventory which increases options for people who want traditional foods. The packaging can also describe the traditional pre-packaged ingredients that make up the package. The pre-package can also offer instructions on how to prepare a meal using the contents of that package.

The other aspect that can improve access to traditional foods is the use of online platforms to promote, avail and connect people to traditional foods. The internet helps with easy access to things. The use of inexpensive online platforms such as social media platforms

can increase access to traditional foods. Using social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok can help to ensure that people know about traditional foods. The promotion will vary as it will encompass information on nearer locations to purchase traditional foods, prices, benefits, and suppliers, among other things. The online platforms can also avail traditional foods by ensuring that people know about ways of how the foods can be delivered to them cost-effectively. The online platforms will ensure that those who need traditional foods without the means to produce them are connected to those who want to supply these kinds of foods.

The study also discovered that another innovative way to improve access to traditional foods is through specialization in production, supply and distribution. The specialization will help with the sharing of information, resources and sustainable methods which ensures that producers can constantly supply the consumers in the peri-urban areas. It will be easy for people who want a specific traditional food to locate the supplier if there is specialization. The supply can also be bulky which means that people will be able to easily access the traditional foods. The distribution can be organised efficiently if there is specialization. For instance, if there is a need for *umleqwa* (traditional chicken), the logistics will focus on collection and delivery from a particular location. This situation of specialization makes it easy for those who want traditional foods as well as for suppliers.

The study noted further that traditional foods have the potential to significantly contribute towards resilient food systems when access to these foods is improved. There are innovative ways to improve access to traditional foods which include structuring and utilization of educational programs, use of exclusive or predominantly traditional foods convenience stores, making use of online platforms and specialization in production, supply and distribution.

### **Limitations of the research**

The study only covered the consumers of traditional foods which excludes the experiences of the producers and provincial officials. There is a need for further studies to find out the issues that might be affecting traditional food producers which has a consequential impact on traditional foods access. As noted in the study, the various traditional foods producers currently do not reside or produce in that peri-urban area which made it complicated to incorporate them into the study. The study also excluded provincial officials who are responsible for the administration, regulation and policymaking of land and the environment. This exclusion was fostered by the limited scope of the study which wanted to be narrowed to specifically innovation improving access to traditional foods.

### **REFERENCES**

- Akinola, R., Pereira, L. M., Mabhaudhi, T., De Bruin, F. M., & Rusch, L. (2020). A review of indigenous food crops in Africa and the implications for more sustainable and healthy food systems. *Sustainability*, 12(8), 1-30. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12083493>.

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022) *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. Sage Publications.
- Carson, J., & Boege, S. (2020). *The intersection of food availability, access, & affordability with food security and health*. University of New Hampshire, Carsey School of Public Policy.
- Chopera, P., Zimunya, P. R., Mugariri, F. M., & Matsungo, T. M. (2022). Facilitators and barriers to the consumption of traditional foods among adults in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Ethnic Foods*, 9(1), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42779-022-00121-y>.
- Constas, M. A., d'Errico, M., Hoddinott, J. F., & Pietrelli, R. (2021). *Resilient food systems – A proposed analytical strategy for empirical applications*. Background paper for The State of Food and Agriculture 2021. FAO Agricultural Development Economics Working Paper 21-10. FAO. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cb7508en>.
- Dogan, I.S., & Simsekli, N. (2015). *Innovations in traditional foods and consumer preferences*. Conference paper: The 3rd International Symposium on Traditional Foods from Adriatic to Caucasus.
- Dumont, E.S., Neely, C., Chesterman, S., Gosling, A., & Chevallier, R. (2022). *A framework for advocating Resilient Food Systems in Africa*. FAO.
- Elliott, B., Jayatilaka, D., Brown, C., Varley, L., & Corbett, K. K. (2012). "We are not being heard": Aboriginal perspectives on traditional foods access and food security. *Journal of Environmental and Public Health*, 2012(1), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2012/130945>.
- Fardet, A., & Rock, E. (2020). Ultra-processed foods and food system sustainability: what are the links? *Sustainability*, 12(15), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12156280>.
- Fanzo, J., Rudie, C., Sigman, I., Grinspoon, S., Benton, T. G., Brown, M. E., Covic, N., Fitch, K., Golden, C. D., Grace, D., Hivert, M. F., Huybers, P., Jaacks, L. M., Masters, W. A., Nisbett, N., Richardson, R. A., Singleton, C. R., Webb, P., & Willett, W. C. (2022). Sustainable food systems and nutrition in the 21st century: A report from the 22nd annual Harvard Nutrition Obesity Symposium. *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 115(1), 18-33. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ajcn/nqab315>.
- FAO & INRAE. (2020). *Enabling sustainable food systems: Innovators' handbook*. Rome: FAO.
- Grann, A., Carlsson, L., & Mansfield-Brown, K. (2023). Barriers and supports to traditional food access in Mi'kma'ki (Nova Scotia). *Canadian Food Studies La Revue Canadienne Des études Sur l'alimentation*, 10(1), 65-85. <https://doi.org/10.15353/cfs-rcea.v10i1.571>.
- Galanakis, C. M. (Ed.). (2019). *Innovations in traditional foods*. Woodhead Publishing.
- Garcia, S., Pastor, R., Monserrat-Mesquida, M., Alvarez-Alvarez, L., Rubin-Garcia, M., Martinez-Gonzalez, M.A., Salas-Salvado, J., Corella, D., Fito, M., Martinez, J.A., & Tojal-Sierra, L. (2023). Ultra-processed foods consumption as a promoting factor of greenhouse gas emissions, water, energy, and land use: A longitudinal assessment. *Science of the Total Environment*, 891, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2023.164417>.
- Harris, J., & Spiegel, E. J. (2019). *Food systems resilience: Concepts & policy approaches*. Center for Agriculture and Food Systems, Vermont Law School, South Royalton, V T

[https://www.nal.usda.gov/sites/default/files/food\\_systems\\_resilience\\_concepts\\_policy\\_approaches\\_final.pdf](https://www.nal.usda.gov/sites/default/files/food_systems_resilience_concepts_policy_approaches_final.pdf).

- Hertel, T., Elouafi, I., Tanticharoen, M., & Ewert, F. (2023). Diversification for enhanced food systems resilience. In J. Von Braun, K. Afsana, L.O. Fresco, & M.H.A. Hassan (Eds.), *Science and innovations for food systems transformation* (pp. 207-215). Springer International Publishing.
- HLPE. (2024). *Building resilient food systems - HLPE-FSN consultation on the scope of the report*. FAO.
- Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future. (2023). Food system resilience. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University.
- Krstikj, A., Egurrola Hernández, E. A., Giorgi, E., & Garnica Monroy, R. (2023). Evaluating the availability, accessibility, and affordability of fresh food in informal food environments in five Mexican cities. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 1-16.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2023.2276778>.
- Leite, F. H. M., Khandpur, N., Andrade, G. C., Anastasiou, K., Baker, P., Lawrence, M., & Monteiro, C. A. (2022). Ultra-processed foods should be central to global food systems dialogue and action on biodiversity. *BMJ Global Health*, 7(3), 1-4.  
<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2021-008269>.
- Lugo-Morin, D. R., & Bhat, R. (2022). Restoring the values of traditional foods. In R. Bhat (Eds.), *Future Foods: Global Trends, Opportunities, and Sustainability Challenges* (pp. 515-525). Academic Press.
- Marrero, A., & Mattei, J. (2022). Reclaiming traditional, plant-based, climate-resilient food systems in small islands. *The Lancet. Planetary Health*, 6(2), 171-179.  
[https://doi.org/10.1016/s2542-5196\(21\)00322-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2542-5196(21)00322-3).
- Nyarko, E., & Bartelmes, T. (2024). Drivers of consumer food choices of multinational corporations' products over local foods in Ghana: a maximum difference scaling study. *Globalization and Health*, 20(1), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-024-01027-x>.
- Panahi, S., Jones, W., Duncan, A. M., Ferland, G., Keller, H., Grantham, A., & House, J. D. (2022). Guidance and perspectives on highly processed foods. *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism*, 47(10), 1038-1044. <https://doi.org/10.1139/apnm-2022-0150>.
- Pereira, L.M., Kushitor, S.B., Cramer, C., Drimie, S., Isaacs, M., Malgas, R., Phiri, E., Tembo, C., & Willis, J. (2022). Leveraging the potential of wild food for healthy, sustainable, and equitable local food systems: Learning from a transformation lab in the Western Cape region. *Sustainability Science*, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-022-01182-3>.
- Robin, T., Burnett, K., Parker, B., & Skinner, K. (2021). Safe food, dangerous lands? Traditional foods and indigenous peoples in Canada. *Frontiers in Communication*, 6, 1-9.  
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2021.749944>.

- Rocillo-Aquino, Z., Cervantes-Escoto, F., Leos-Rodríguez, J. A., Cruz-Delgado, D., & Espinoza-Ortega, A. (2021). What is a traditional food? Conceptual evolution from four dimensions. *Journal of Ethnic Foods*, 8, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42779-021-00113-4>.
- Stray Dog Institute. (2022). *The importance of viewing food access disparities systemically. Environment, Food Justice and Sovereignty*. Leawood: Stray Dog Institute.
- WFP & FAO. (2024). *Hunger hotspots. FAO–WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity: June to October 2024 Outlook*. Rome: FAO.