POLICY BRIEF

Improving Food Access in Dar es Salaam's Urban Peripheries: The Role of Weekly Markets

By

Luitfred Kissoly
Claudio Ngassa
Fatma Norman
Sabrina Rutatora
Angela Aluko

November 2025/No. PASHFARM-PB-004

Improving Food Access in Dar es Salaam's Urban Peripheries: The Role of Weekly Markets

Authors and Affiliations

Authors: Luitfred Kissoly [a] Claudio Ngassa [a], Fatma Norman [a], Sabrina Rutatora [b] and Angela Aluko [c]

[a] Department of Economics and Social Studies, Ardhi University, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
[b] Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Ardhi University, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
[c] Department of Food Science and Technology, Mbeya University of Science and Technology, Mbeya, Tanzania

Key Messages

1. Recognize and support Weekly Food Markets (WFMs) as vital sources of affordable, fresh, and nutritious food for low-income urban households.
2. Integrate WFMs into city planning and food system strategies to ensure they can meet the needs of growing urban populations.
3. Adopt flexible market models that combine WFMs with permanent market spaces to expand food access in underserved areas.
4. Invest in basic market infrastructure—including sanitation, shading, waste collection, and security—to improve food safety and public confidence.
5. Establish and enforce clear local regulations on vendor management, market hygiene, and food safety to strengthen WFM governance.

1. The Context

Ensuring access to safe and nutritious food is a growing policy priority across Africa, where rapid urbanization and population growth are transforming cities. By 2050, sub-Saharan Africa's (SSA) population will reach about 2.5 billion, with 60% living in urban areas and up to 15 mega-cities emerging (UN-DESA, 2021; Chen et al., 2022). Much of this growth is happening in urban peripheries with limited infrastructure, where access to food, water, and sanitation remains inadequate (Ingwani et al., 2024; Meth et al., 2021). Amid these gaps, Weekly Food Markets (WFMs) have become crucial food access points. Operated semi-formally by local authorities, they allow small vendors to sell fresh, affordable foods directly to consumers (Hiebert et al., 2017).

This policy brief examines how WFMs contribute to nutritious food access in Dar es Salaam, the fastest-growing city in Tanzania, where many peri-urban households rely on such informal outlets (Blekking et al., 2023). The insights aim to inform inclusive food policies that improve access for underserved urban populations.

2. The Problem

In many SSA cities, WFMs serve as the primary source of affordable, fresh, and nutritious foods (FAO, 2020). Despite their critical role, WFMs are often overlooked in urban planning, limiting their capacity to address food insecurity and support low-income households (Blekking et al., 2023). Rapid urban growth, inadequate infrastructure, weak regulatory oversight, and volatile food prices further constrain access to healthy diets (Turner et al., 2018).

In Dar es Salaam's peripheries, these challenges are particularly acute. Low-income households face limited proximity to markets, inconsistent availability of fresh produce, and rising prices (Msuya et al., 202; Reardon et al., 2015). WFMs, therefore, remain essential for food security, dietary diversity, and local livelihoods. Further, strengthening these markets has the potential to expand access to nutritious foods, strengthen urban resilience, and ensure equitable food systems as cities continue to grow, thereby contributing to SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health), and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities).

3. Research Results

The study covered all five municipalities of Dar es Salaam, mapping both permanent and weekly food markets to understand their role in improving access to nutritious foods. Data were collected from market vendors and buyers to assess food diversity, affordability, and accessibility. Mapping the distribution of markets helped identify underserved areas where municipal action could improve infrastructure, regulation, and food access for growing urban populations.

The study's results highlight the central role of WFMs in improving food access and dietary diversity in the peripheral areas of Dar es Salaam. Results point to three main areas of insight:

i. *Spatial Distribution and Planning:* WFMs are widely distributed across Dar es Salaam's peripheries, where permanent markets are few and distant. They serve as key food access points for low- and middle-income households, offering fresh, diverse, and culturally preferred foods at lower prices. Spatial mapping shows that many of these markets operate in areas with limited formal retail outlets and weak infrastructure. This pattern demonstrates the adaptive nature of WFMs in filling gaps within the urban food system and highlights their potential role in ensuring equitable access to nutritious food as cities expand.

ii. *Infrastructure and Operations:* Most WFMs operate with limited infrastructure, few have proper stalls, shade, water, or sanitation facilities. Vendors often use

temporary setups that provide flexibility but compromise hygiene and comfort. These conditions also make markets vulnerable to weather disruptions and limit their efficiency. Despite these constraints, WFMs remain popular among consumers for their affordability and freshness. The findings suggest that simple, low-cost improvements—such as modular stalls, waste points, and shared sanitary facilities—could substantially improve food safety and vendor operations without altering the semi-formal character that makes these markets accessible.

iii. *Governance and Regulation:* WFMs function in a semi-formal space, where governance is largely informal and reliant on local arrangements between vendors and ward officials. This allows flexibility but leads to inconsistent enforcement of hygiene, fee collection, and site management. Vendors express both appreciation for autonomy and concern over market insecurity and lack of formal recognition. Findings indicate that a balanced approach—where municipal authorities provide basic oversight and clear operational guidelines while maintaining the informal strengths of WFMs—could enhance accountability, stability, and public confidence in these markets.

4. Implications for Policy Makers - Conclusions and policy recommendations:

Based on the study of WFMs in Dar es Salaam's peripheral areas, the following actionable policy recommendations are proposed to enhance their role in providing nutritious foods and strengthening urban food security:

i. *Integrate WFMs into Urban Planning:* Local governments should allocate designated spaces for WFMs within urban plans, particularly in rapidly growing peripheral areas. Despite their informal and transitionary nature, WFMs significantly increase access to affordable, fresh, and nutritious foods. Municipalities should adopt hybrid models that recognize both periodic and permanent markets, improve market stability, address infrastructure gaps, and ensure continuous food supply.

ii. *Enhance WFM Infrastructure and Services:* Investments in essential infrastructure, such as mobile shades, sanitation facilities, waste management systems, and security, can improve market operations and consumer experience. Municipalities should develop hygiene and operational standards and promote modular, easily deployable solutions to support the dynamic nature of WFMs. Improved infrastructure will enhance market resilience, public health, and consumer confidence.

iii. *Strengthen Governance and Regulation:* Clear municipal guidelines are needed for vendor registration, hygiene, food safety, and market operations. Institutionalizing WFM governance through oversight and enforceable regulations will ensure safe, reliable, and transparent markets. This approach supports long-term sustainability

while preserving the flexibility and accessibility that make WFMs critical to peripheral communities.

Conclusively, policymakers shall need to act decisively to strengthen WFMs as a vital source of affordable, fresh, and nutritious foods for residents in rapidly growing urban peripheries. Municipalities should integrate WFMs into urban planning, invest in market infrastructure, promote diverse food availability, and establish clear governance frameworks. Implementing these measures will improve food access, support low-income households, and build a resilient and equitable urban food system in SSA's expanding cities.

References

Blekking J, Giroux S, Waldman K, et al. (2022) Spatial characteristics of urban food systems and food retailers in smaller urban areas. In: *Transforming Urban Food Systems in Secondary Cities in Africa*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 151-167. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-93072-1_8

Chen M, Jia W, Yan L, et al. (2022) Quantification and mapping cooling effect and its accessibility of urban parks in an extreme heat event in a megacity. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 334, 130252. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2021.130252

FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, WHO (2020) *The state of food security and nutrition in the world 2020: transforming food systems for affordable healthy diets* (Vol. 2020). Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Fund for Agricultural Development, The United Nations Children's Fund, World Food Programme and World Health Organization. Rome. https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9692e.

Hiebert D, Rath J, Vertovec S (2017) Urban markets and diversity: Towards a research agenda. *Cities, Diversity and Ethnicity*, 17-32. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2014.953969

Ingwani E, Thynell M, Gurure LR, et al. (2024) The impacts of peri-urban expansion on municipal and ecosystem services: Experiences from Makhado Biaba town, South Africa. *Urban Forum*, 35(2), 297-327. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12132-023-09499-7

Meth P, Goodfellow T, Todes A, et al. (2021) Conceptualizing African urban peripheries. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 45(6), 985-1007. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.13044

Msuya I, Moshi I, Levira F (2021) Land pattern of highly urbanizing cities: Change in built-up area, population density and spatial development of the sprawling Dar es Salaam City. *Environment and Urbanization Asia*, 12(1_suppl), S165-S182. https://doi.org/10.1177/0975425321998036

Reardon T, Tschirley D, Minten B, et al. (2015) Transformation of African agrifood systems in the new era of rapid urbanization and the emergence of a middle class. In *Beyond a middle-income Africa: Transforming African economies for sustained growth with rising employment and incomes* (pp. 62-74). ReSAKSS Annual Trends and Outlook Report 2014. International Food Policy Research Institute. https://hdl.handle.net/10568/150493

Turner C, Aggarwal A, Walls H, Herforth A, Drewnowski A, Coates J, Kadiyala S (2018) Concepts and critical perspectives for food environment research: a global framework with implications for action in low-and middle-income countries. *Global Food Security*, 18, pp. 93-101. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gfs.2018.08.003

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA), Population Division (2022) *World Population Prospects 2022: Summary of Results*. UN DESA/POP/2022/TR/NO. 3. Available at:

Acknowledgements:

This study was conducted with financial and technical support from the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) under the Policy Analysis for Sustainable Healthy Foods in African Retail Markets (PASHFARM) project [Grant No: AE/FAC/24-075, 2024] with generous funding from the Gates Foundation (GF). We sincerely thank all participants of the AERC (PASHFARM) review workshops, including resource persons, peers, and technical advisors on nutrition and gender, for their valuable insights, feedback, and recommendations throughout the project.

Annex: COSTING CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF PROPOSED POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

General Recommendation	Specific Recommendation	Proposed Actions / Activities	Indicative Costs (TZS)	Financing Sources
1. Formalize & Integrate WFMs into Urban Planning	1.1 Create a zoning plan (spaces for permanent & weekly markets)	▪ GIS mapping of potential sites ▪ Stakeholder consultations with ward authorities & vendors ▪ Formal gazettement of WFM spaces	Mapping + consultations: 15–25M/ward Drafting by-laws: 10–15M **Total: 25–40M/ward**	Municipal planning budget; Development partners technical assistance (UN-Habitat, Cities Alliance, World Bank)
	1.2 Develop hybrid models (WFMs + permanent markets)	▪ Pilot hybrid markets in peri-urban wards ▪ Vendor allocation guidelines ▪ Fee collection system to sustain market services	Pilot per ward: 10–15M Oversight: 5–8M annually Total: 15–23M/ward (annualized)	Municipal revenue; vendor fees; PPPs for service management
		Subtotal for Recommendation 1	**≈ 40–63M per ward (1st year)**	
2. Improve WFM Infrastructure & Services	2.1 Develop hygiene & waste management standards	▪ Draft and adopt hygiene & waste standards ▪ Training sessions for vendors on food safety ▪ Allocate dedicated waste points in each market ▪ Ensure weekly waste collection through contractors	Drafting & legal: 5–10M Vendor training: 2–3M/market Supervise weekly waste collection 500K per market **Total: 7–13.5M/market**	Municipal health/environment budget; Municipal and/or Development partners support for training. Vendor fees for collectiong wastes
	2.2 Deploy modular/mobile infrastructure (shades, stalls, sanitation, lighting)	▪ Collapsible stalls with shading (≈ 350k each) ▪ Mobile toilets (≈ 1.5M each) ▪ Handwash stations (≈ 200k each) ▪ Waste bins (≈ 150k each) ▪ Solar tower (≈ 2M each)	Example (per market, 50 vendors): 50 stalls = 17.5M; 3 toilets = 4.5M; 5 handwash = 1M; 10 bins = 1.5M; 2 solar towers = 4M; **Total ≈ 28.5M/market**	Cost-sharing: vendors contribute via daily/weekly fees; municipal subsidy for sanitation & waste; Development partners /CSR support for cold storage & solar
		Subtotal for Recommendation 2	**≈ 35.5–41.5M per market**	
3. Institutionalize WFMs Governance & Regulation	3.1 Enhance municipal oversight	▪ Assign dedicated market officers ▪ Strengthen WFM committees with vendor representation ▪ Regular monitoring & reporting	Market officer: 600k–1.2M/month = 7.2–14.4M/year; Committee support: 2–3M/year. Total: 9.2–17.4M/market annually	Municipal recurrent budget; licensing fees; Development partners co-finance capacity building

	3.2 Strengthen & enforce regulations (food safety, hygiene, fair practices)	▪ Draft WFM-specific by-laws ▪ Vendor registration/licensing system ▪ Training of inspectors & committees	By-law drafting: 5–8M; Licensing system: 8–12M; Training workshops: 3–5M/market. Total: 16–25M (setup + training)	Municipal trade/legal departments; vendor licensing fees; donor legal/technical support
		Subtotal for Recommendation 3	**≈ 25.2–42.4M/market annually (**incl. setup + oversight**)**	

Key Assumptions for Costing and Implementation

- Municipal authorities have the capacity and willingness to allocate budget, staff, and oversight for WFM implementation.
- Ward authorities, vendors, and community members will actively participate in planning, consultations, and adoption of standards.
- Indicative costs reflect current rates, but actual expenses may vary due to inflation or procurement conditions.
- Vendor fees, municipal revenue, and PPPs will provide sufficient financing for infrastructure and services.
- Development partners will continue to provide technical and financial support for capacity building and pilot activities.
- Vendors and authorities will comply with newly revised hygiene, waste management, and governance regulations.
- Implementation costs are scalable to additional wards or markets with proportional adjustments.
- Modular infrastructure and GIS tools will be available and function reliably to support interventions.
- Long-term sustainability assumes ongoing municipal and vendor contributions with effective policy oversight.

Mission

To strengthen local capacity for conducting independent, rigorous inquiry into the problems facing the management of economies in sub-Saharan Africa.

The mission rests on two basic premises: that development is more likely to occur where there is sustained sound management of the economy, and that such management is more likely to happen where there is an active, well-informed group of locally based professional economists to conduct policy-relevant research.

Bringing Rigour and Evidence to Economic Policy Making in Africa

- Improve quality.
- Ensure Sustainability.
- Expand influence.

www.aercafrica.org

Learn More

www.facebook.com/aercafrica

www.instagram.com/aercafrica_official/

twitter.com/aercafrica

www.linkedin.com/school/aercafrica/

Contact Us
African Economic Research Consortium
Consortium pour la Recherche Economique en Afrique
Middle East Bank Towers,
3rd Floor, Jakaya Kikwete Road
Nairobi 00200, Kenya
Tel: +254 (0) 20 273 4150
communications@aercafrica.org