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Title: Coping strategies and food variety in rural and urban communities in the KwaZulu Natal province in South Africa

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Food security is a part of nutrition security and exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. About two billion people in the world face intermittent food insecurity, with at least 850 million facing hunger on a daily basis.

The aim was to explore the coping strategies communities engage in during time of hunger and to discuss food variety and use of traditional foods. The results presented here are from three communities, two rural communities, one (n=100) employing farming and one non-farming practises (n=250) and an inner city community (n=150) in the KwaZulu Natal province.

The Coping strategy index presented that “relying on less expensive food”, “eating at neighbours or friends” and “limiting portion sizes” was commonly engaged in at various levels of severity by the three groups. The urban group had to employ strategies of a high severity rate more often than the rural groups. The rural farming community made use of a bigger variety of traditional foods and included a wider variety of fruit in the diet compared to the other two groups. The inner city group with a lower unemployment rate (36%) presented a higher carbohydrate intake with sweetened beverages.

Communities with access to farm land do have access to a wider food variety. Inner city communities have to revert to a higher number of coping strategies in time of hunger.