

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the cost and affordability of diet in Thailand and the Philippines



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World Vegetable Center

Why is a healthy diet important?



- 3 billion people worldwide cannot afford a healthy diet
- Asia is home to a significant proportion of the world's population and is the hardest hit region when it comes to malnutrition
- Poor diets are a root cause of malnutrition
- Emerging literature suggests that healthy diets is part of the solution to malnutrition



What is a healthy diet?



Cereals and its products



Meat and its products



Milk and its products



Fruits



Vegetables



Fats, oil, sugar

General guidelines:

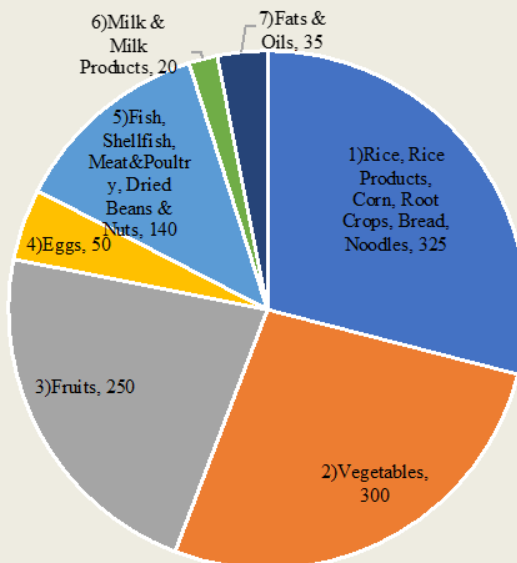
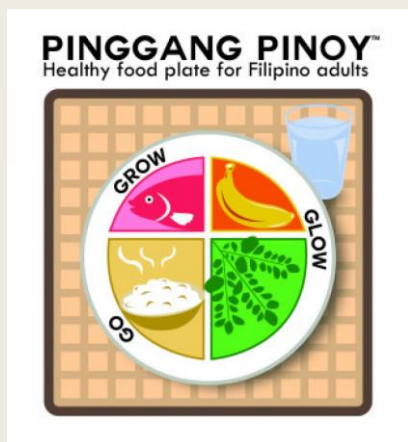
- Diversity and balance across food groups
- High intake of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes/nuts
- Low sodium, oils/fats, sugar, red meat

Photo credit: <https://pxhere.com>

Food Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDGs)



FBDGs developed to create awareness and educate people on healthy diets

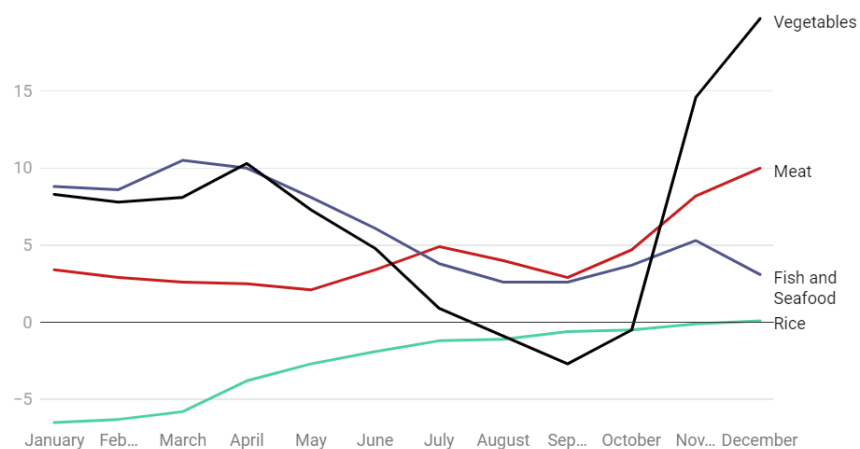


However, while education and awareness are important, **the cost of food** remains the biggest challenge in adopting a healthy diet for most consumers in different contexts

What is the binding constraint to adopting healthy diets?



Food prices rise amid recession



Source: Philippine Statistics Authority • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

- Healthy foods, such as **vegetables**, fruits and animal source foods, are **more expensive** compared to staples (rice, corn)
- **The situation is worsening because of COVID-19 pandemic**

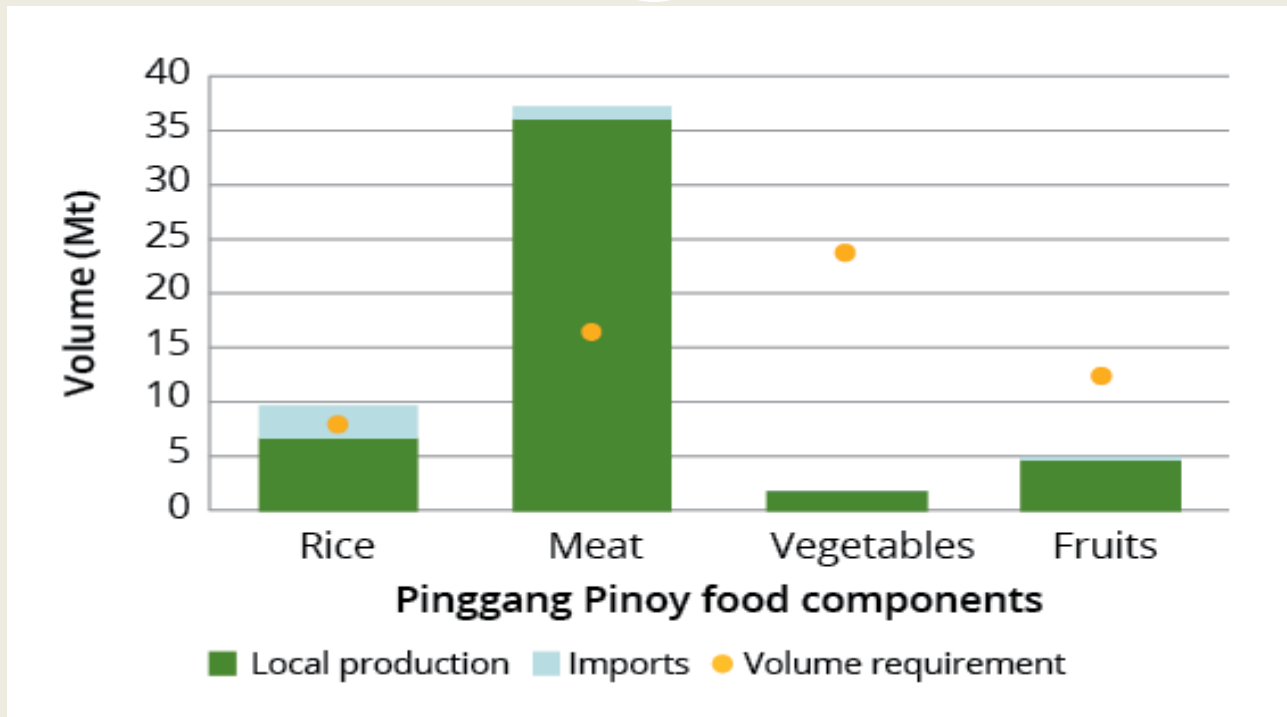
How does COVID-19 affect the cost of a healthy diet?



- **Smallholders:** constrained by labor shortfall, low access to inputs
- **Food supply chains:** intra-country travel and transport restrictions, closed market places
- **Food at home:** No school meals and other safety nets that rely on face to face contact



Food production versus volume requirement; example



Philippines data, 2019

Pinggang Pinoy recommends the volume of food needed to meet nutrition requirements.

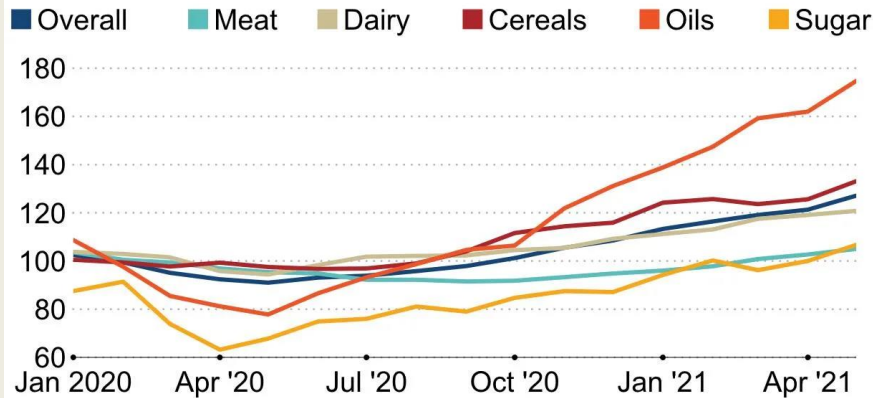
In Philippines, pork meat production recorded a 129% surplus against required volumes while vegetables recorded 92.2% shortage (2019 data)

Soaring food prices during COVID-19



- **Food prices:** are soaring especially during the COVID-19 pandemic
- **Employment:** wages/income are falling

Global food price indexes soar amid pandemic



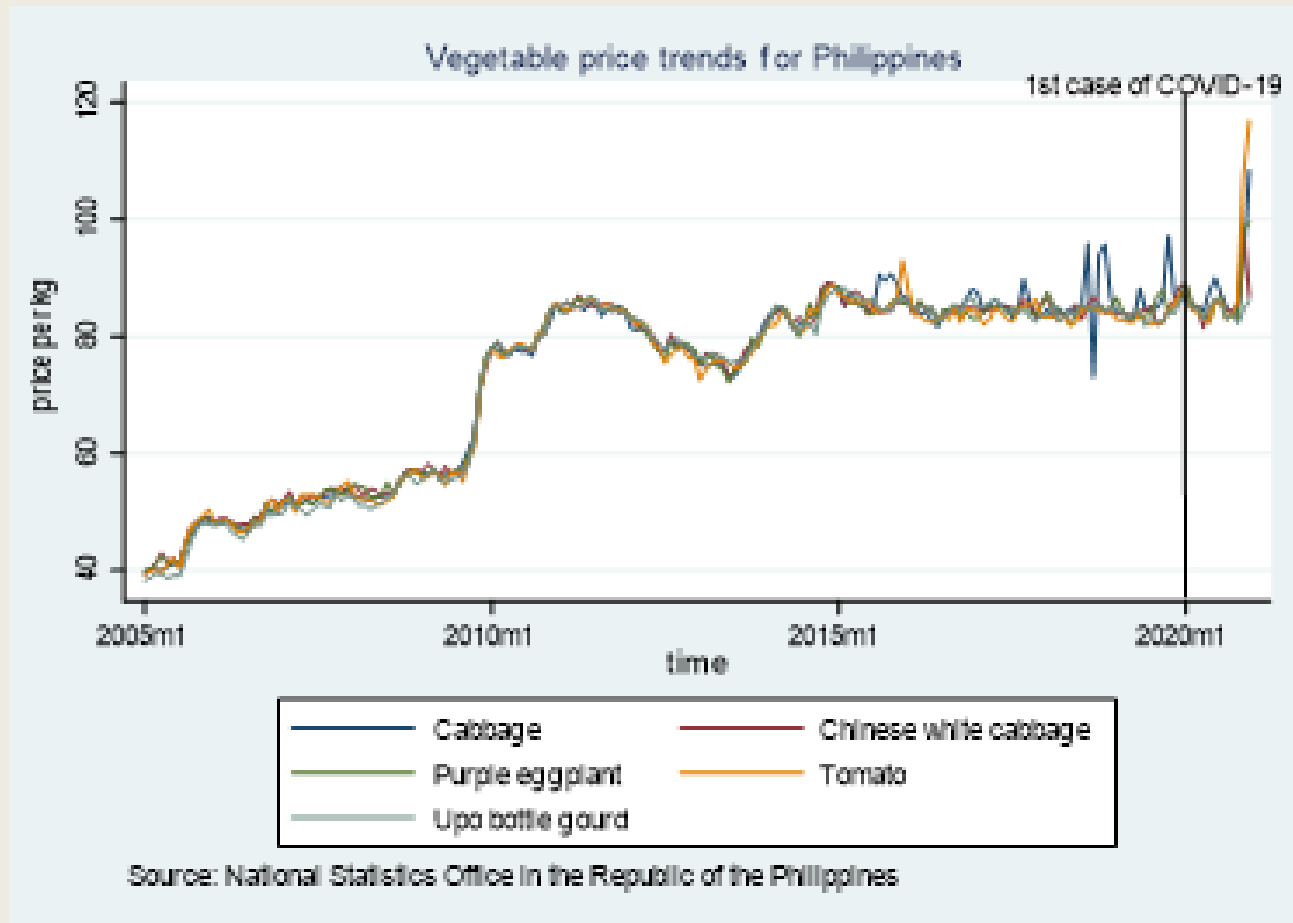
Source: Food and Agriculture Organization

Global food price index hits 10-year high



Source: Food and Agriculture Organization

Vegetable prices in the Philippines



Calculating the cost of a healthy diet



1. Operationalize what a healthy diet is based on FBDGs for specific countries
2. Ensure food price is in standard units e.g. price per kg/liter
3. Categorize each food in food price list according to the FBDG
4. Calculate price per day for each item: price per kg*quantity required per day in kgs (accounting for edible portion)
5. Select 1-3 least cost items (price/recommended quantity to purchase/day) in each food group, ensuring that each item is unique

Affordability



- Compare the cost of diet with affordability (across regions-provinces, urban/rural, different population groups-gender, age etc.)
 - Household income
 - Household expenditure
 - Wages

Progress made



- Food price, household income and expenditure data obtained all thanks to the Ministry of Commerce in Thailand and the National Statistics Office in the Republic of the Philippines
- Data cleaned and analysis of descriptive is underway
- Established collaborations with Kasetsart University: intending to expand to Mahidol University and Ministry of Agriculture in Philippines



Source: yourfreetemplates.com



Ministry of Commerce



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Thank you

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