Why measure the cost of nutritious diets?
- Rural and urban food markets are changing rapidly
- To track food systems for nutrition, we need new kinds of price indexes
- Measuring the cost of nutritious diets can guide intervention
  - where do diet costs exceed earnings, so transfers are needed?
  - which foods & nutrients drive costs up, so access can be improved?

What do we find in Malawi?
- High food prices make nutritious diets out of reach for the poor
- Variation over space and time reveals opportunities for intervention

The cost of a nutritious diet is highest in pregnancy and lactation, and well above local and global poverty lines

How do we define cost of nutritious diets?
- For affordability, we seek the least expensive foods needed to meet each nutritional standard
  - Data are retail prices for all items available at each place and time
  - Matched to food attributes associated with health outcomes
- For nutrition, we use established diet quality metrics
  - Nutrient adequacy, based on requirements for essential nutrients
  - Recommended diets, based on guidelines for food groups
- The cost of meeting each diet-quality standard answers a different question, and can be compared to household income

What do we find across countries?
- Retail prices for perishables vary with local conditions, driving differences in cost of diets

The cost of a nutritious diet relative to subsistence calories reveals food system performance

Figure 1: Range of costs per day across 29 markets in Malawi, each month from Jan. 2007 to July 2017, by life stage and reproductive status, relative to the global ($1.90) and local ($1.50) poverty lines, in US$ at 2011 prices

Figure 2: Ratio of cost for nutrient adequacy to cost of calories for 158 countries in 2011, for an adult woman

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