



## **Measuring food access as the cost and affordability of healthy diets**

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### **Abstract**

For the purpose of calculating and comparing the cost and affordability of healthy diets across countries globally, a single comparable standard is needed. But what is a healthy diet? The approach taken to develop this standard was to leverage and reflect the work already done in countries around the world. National food-based dietary guidelines (FBDG) developed by countries serve to define what is a healthy diet; these have been elaborated and published by over 100 countries. Recent and quantifiable national FBDG were identified in all regions of the world. These were quantified in terms the range and average amount in dietary energy (kcal) of each food group recommended per day per person. Average amounts of each food group across guidelines were determined and used to construct a Healthy Diet Basket (HDB). The cost of the Healthy Diet Basket and each of the originally quantified FBDG was found by analyzing food price data from 177 countries globally from the World Bank International Comparison Program (2017), showing that the Healthy Diet Basket is proportionally similar to the national FBDGs from which it was derived, as well as additional non-quantified national food guides. The cost of the HDB is also similar to or lower than national FBDGs. Even least-cost diets meeting this standard are unaffordable for many people in the world, pointing to the need for accelerated action to make healthy diets accessible for all. The Healthy Diet Basket is a transparent, global standard set of criteria that represents commonalities across most FBDG globally, appropriate for comparing the cost and affordability of healthy diets across countries.