Cost and Affordability of a Healthy Diet: monitoring food access in Malawi

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Vision: food price measurement to match food security aspiration

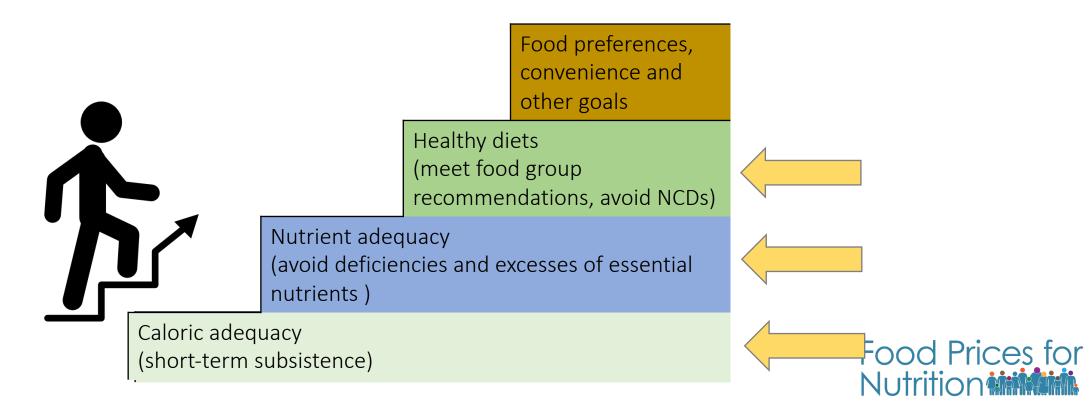
Food security is when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to meet dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.



- World Food Summit, 1996

Why do we track the cost of healthy diets?

- Policies and programs pursue what is measured
- Research finds higher costs for each "step up"
- If the next step is unaffordable, food prices are an insurmountable barrier



Cost and Affordability of a Healthy Diet: indicators to understand food access

Measuring physical and economic access to healthy diets

- Use retail food prices to identify the least expensive combinations of locally available foods
 - No standard "food basket"
 - Least-cost items and cost depend on time and place
- Least-cost diets and their affordability help to explain why healthy diets are not consumed



CoAHD is monitored globally to understand food access

 Used in the UN State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (2020, 2021, 2022), joining other food security metrics



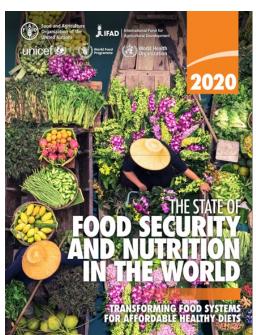
Masters, W.A. 2020.

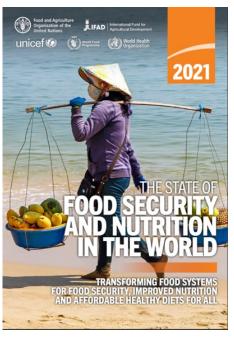
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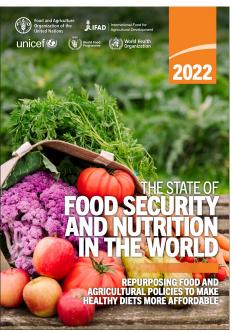
https://doi.org/10.4060/cb

Herforth, A., Venkat, A., Bai, Y., Costlow, L., Holleman, C. & Masters, W.A. 2022.

https://doi.org/10.4060/cc1169en







https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/CAHD/





Cost

If you go to an average market in Malawi, how much does it cost to purchase a diet that satisfies dietary guidelines?

Affordability

How many people could not afford this cost?

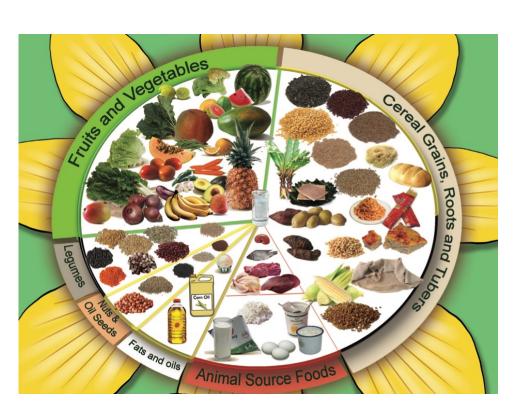
Defining healthy diets to measure CoHD

 Based on food-based dietary guidelines (FBDGs)

 FBDGs represent a realistic way for people to select nutrientadequate diets, using food groups



Quantified food-based dietary guidelines tell us how



much food we need

Source: Federal Government of Ethiopia, Ministry of Health, Ethiopian Public Health Institute (2022). Ethiopia: Food-Based Dietary Guidelines–2022. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Table 1. The recommended intake of different food groups in grams per day+* for the general population and various age-range subpopulations from individual and population diet modelling

Food group	General population above 2 years (g)	2 –5 years ())	6-18 years and 65+ years (g)	19–64 years (non-fasting) (g)	19-64 years (intermittent fasting) (g)	19-64 years (continuous fasting) (g)
Grains, white roots and tubers	570 (400–650)	490 (450– 500)	600 (500– 800)	650 (500– 800)	600 (500– 800)	600 (500– 800)
Pulses	90 (80–115)	90 (80– 115)	115 (80– 115)	90 (90–120)	100 (90– 150)	200 (100– 250)
Nuts and seeds	15 (10–20)	⁻ 5 (5–20)	10 (5–20)	15 (10–20)	15 (10–25)	50 (20–60)
Milk and dairy foods	250 (200–400)	200 (150– 250)	200 (150– 250)	250 (150– 300)	250 (0–400)	0
Meat and eggs	30 (20–50)	30 (30–50)	50 (30–50)	45 (40–90)	40 (0–90)	0
Fruits	150 (110–160)	100 (100– 150)	150 (100– 200)	150 (100– 200)	150 (100– 200)	200 (150– 250)
Vegetables	130 (100–140)	75 (70– 00)	95 (70–100)	120 (100– 170)	130 (100– 150)	135 (100– 150)
Fats and oils	15 (10–17)	5 (10–17)	15 (10–17)	15 (10–17)	15 (10–17)	15 (10–17)
Added sugar and SSBs	15 (0–31)	5 (0–31)	15 (0–31)	15 (0–31)	15 (0–31)	15 (0–31)
Salt	~5 (O_3)	5 (0–3)	<5 (0-3)	<5 (0–3)	<5 (0–3)	<5 (0-3)
Alcohol	50 (0–150)	0	0	50 (0–150)	50 (0–150)	50 (0–150)
Physical activity+	>3 (3–5)	>3 (3–5)	>3 (3–5)	>3 (3–5)	>3 (3–5)	>3 (3–5)
Potable water*	>8 (8–10)	>8 (8–10)	>8 (8–10)	>8 (8–10)	>8 (8–10)	>8 (8–10)

Notes

Pregnant or breastfeeding women should take at least one additional meal from the food group that is not part of their main meal for the day

The recommended amounts given for the general population are an average amount that can be used for public messages and tips

⁺days/week: at least 30 minutes per activity day

^{*}glass/day: average estimated based on the current intake, optimized individual diets and population diet



Figure 10: Revised Malawi six food groups guide

Tips for portion control using the hand jive

- Use your own hand to estimate the portion sizes of each food group.
- Vegetables should make the biggest part of any meal. Use both hands cupped to estimate a big enough portion per meal. Refer to Figure 17.
- Fruits like oranges and apples can be size of your closed fist (Figure 18).
- Use the palm of your hand to estimate the amount of meat, nuts and legumes to be taken at each meal. Refer to figure 19.
- As shown in figure 20, staple foods should be the size of your closed fist.
- Use healthy fats and oils the size of your thumb (Figure 21).

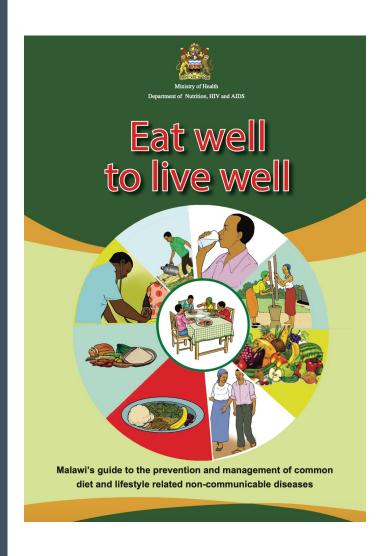


Figure 17: Vegetable portion size per meal



Figure 18: Fruit portion size per meal





- Eat a minimum of 2 portions of a variety of fresh fruit and 3 portions of fresh vegetables per day
- Aim towards filling up at least half of your plate with fruits and vegetables at each meal.
- Buy fresh vegetables and fruits in season which are likely to be cheaper.
- Have a home garden of fruits and vegetables to ensure supply throughout the year.

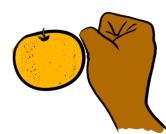


Figure 12: Portion sizes for fruits



Figure 20: Staple food portion size per meal

Healthy Diet Basket

Food group	# of foods recommended	Calories (kcal/day)
Starchy staples	2	1160
Vegetables	3	110
Fruits	2	160
Animal source foods	2	300
Legumes nuts and seeds	1	300
Oils and fats	1	300
Total	11	2330



















Vegetables



Animal-

source

foods





- Global standard / criteria
- Represents commonalities across most national foodbased dietary guidelines
- Created for comparing the cost of healthy diets across countries
- Used when a country has no quantifiable FBDG

Least-cost healthy diet

- The cost of the **least expensive** combination of locally-available foods that meet FBDG recommendations
- Within the least-cost healthy diet
 - Food group proportions stay constant (share of kcal)
 - Within food groups, food items are substitutable
 - Least-cost items may vary at each time and place
- Match retail prices for each food to:
 - Food composition
 - Requirements for health (FBDGs)



Steps to calculate the Cost of a Healthy Diet

- 1. Calculate the price per kg for each food
- 2. Match each food to its food composition (calories, edible portion)
- 3. Calculate the price per calorie for each food
- 4. Categorize each food in the appropriate food group
- 5. Calculate the cost per day for each food
- 6. Drop duplicate items of the same food
- 7. Select the least-expensive food item(s) per food group
- 8. Sum the cost per day for all foods



Cost of a Healthy Diet: Algebraic example

Food item	Unit sold	Item weight (kg)	Price per unit	Currency
Eggs, local chicken	1 dozen	0.6	2,400	Malawian Kwacha (MWK)

1 dozen eggs in shell

 $1 \text{ egg} \approx 50 \text{ grams or } 0.05 \text{ kg}$ 0.05 kg / 1 egg x 12 eggs = 0.6 kg / dozen eggs



2400 MWK / dozen eggs

0.6 kg / dozen eggs

4000 MWK / kg of egg



4000 MWK / kg of egg

0.88 kg edible egg / 1 kg of egg in shell

= 4545 MWK / kg of edible egg



4545 MWK / kg edible egg

1430 kcal / kg / 1 kg edible egg

= 3.2 MWK / kcal of egg

Dietary Guidelines 3.2 MWK / kcal of egg x 150 kcal / day

= 477 MWK / day

Calculate **price** per kilogram

Calculate **price** per kilogram of edible food

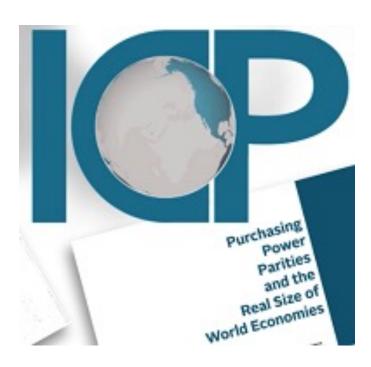
Calculate **price** per calorie

Calculate cost per day to meet food group recommendation

Food price data

- Global analysis: World Bank's International Comparison Program (ICP) dataset from 2017
 - Only global dataset of retail prices
 - Food list is designed for comparability across countries
 - One national average price

- National monitoring: use retail food prices from
 - Consumer Price Index data
 - Market information system data



Least-cost diet from the 2017 ICP price data

Food group	Least-cost item (2017 ICP)		Cost per day (2017 MWK)	Cost per day (2017 PPP)
Animal source foods	Dried sardines		130	0.536
	Milk, fresh, unskimmed		133	0.548
Fruits	Large mango		42	0.174
	Fresh bananas	Cost to	54	0.222
Legumes nuts and seeds	Groundnuts	purchase 300	31	0.130
Oils and fats	Soybean oil	calories of animal-source	42	0.176
Starchy staples	Maize flour, yellow	foods from two	4 7	0.071
	Broken rice, 25%	different items	02	0.257
Vegetables	Fresh cabbage, green	(150 kcal each)	30	0.125
	Fresh eggplants (aubergines)		54	0.222
	Fresh carrots		64	0.264
			659	2.72

659 MWK \$2.72

Cost of a Healthy Diet

Using 2017 ICP data for Malawi



Soybean oil 31 MWK

\$0.13

79 MWK

\$0.33

Groundnuts Maize flour, yellow
Broken rice, 25%

96 MWK

\$0.40

Mango Bananas

Eggplants

148 MWK

Cabbage

\$0.61

262 MWK

\$1.08

Dried sardines

Carrots Milk, fresh



















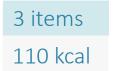






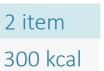














11 items 2330 kcal

National and global CoAHD may differ

Dietary standard

The cost of national FBDG and HDB can have small differences, as we have seen In Malawi, use HDB because it aligns closely with Eat Well to Live Well

Price data

Overall, national data are likely to result in lower costs In Malawi: NSO data

Affordability standards

The % of income spent on food; in many countries the actual % of income spend on food is different than 52%

In Malawi, about 62%

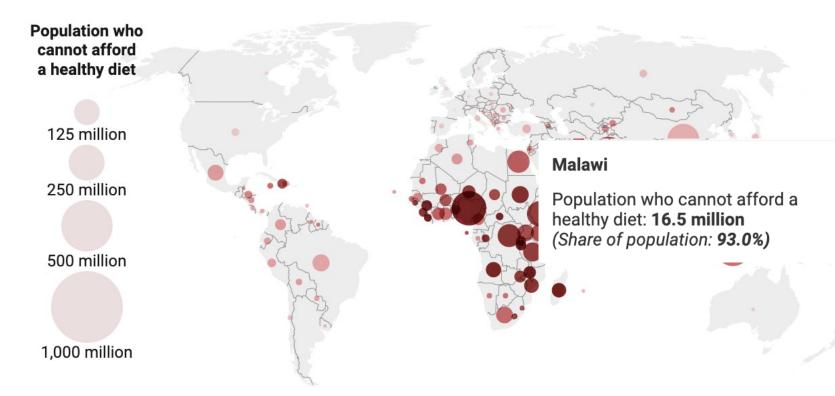


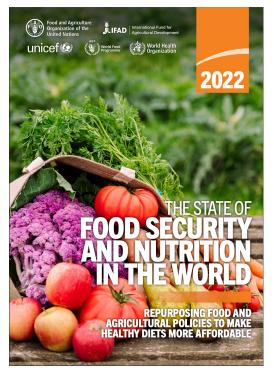
Around 3 billion people could not afford a healthy diet in 2020

Hover over interactive chart to see country data

Share of population who cannot afford a healthy diet

0% 50% 100%





ttps://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/CAHD/





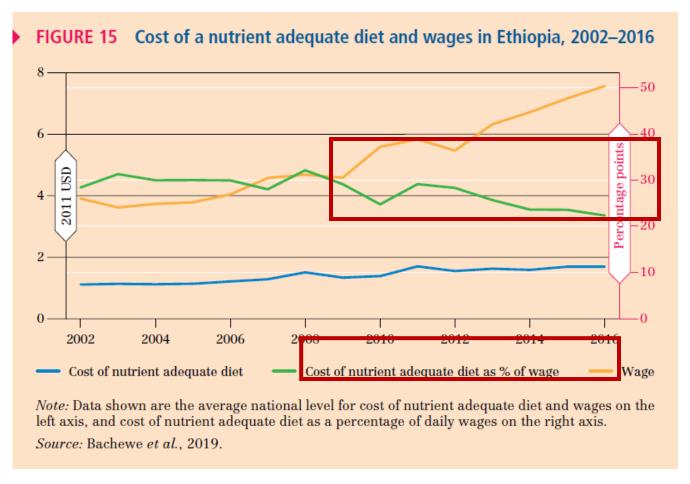
How many people cannot afford a healthy diet?

- Affordability analyses compare Cost of a Healthy Diet to an income standard
- Global analyses:
 - compare CoHD to 52% of income using national accounts data compiled by World Bank ICP
- Other options: household expenditure, wages, Cost of a Healthy Diet as a food poverty line



Can incorporate other data, including wages

- Daily wages for unskilled laborers
- Cost as a percentage of wages decreased from 32% (2008) to 22% (2016)
- Affordability improved due to wage increases rather than less expensive food



Source: Bachewe et al., 2019; Herforth et al., 2020

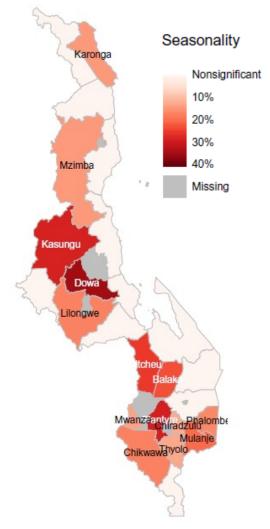


Monitoring

Why do we need to monitor regularly? Seasonality of price variation in Malawi

 Seasonal intensity shows the % that the peak price increased over the lowest price

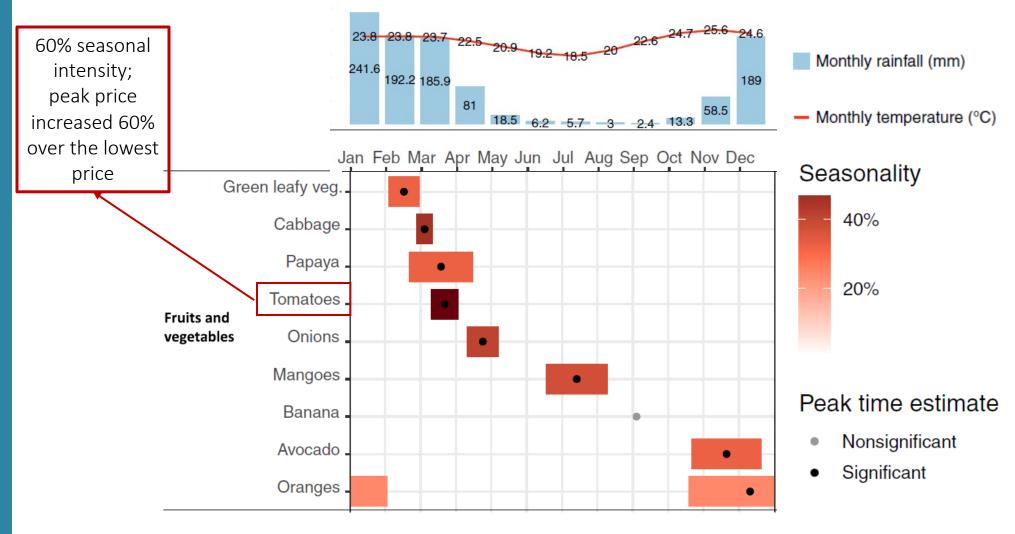
- Seasonality was much stronger in Malawi (10%) as compared to Tanzania (6%) and Ethiopia (4%)
 - 35% in Dowa; 5 districts had >20% on average





Source: Bai, Naumova and Masters (2020)

Fruit and vegetable prices highly seasonal



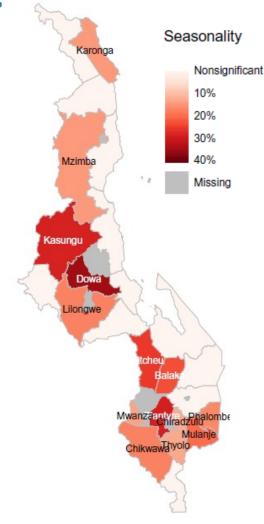
Source: Bai, Naumova and Masters (2020)

Food Prices for Nutrition

Why do we need to monitor regularly? Seasonality of price variation in Malawi

• Relatively low intensity of seasonality for starchy staples, high for fruits and vegetables

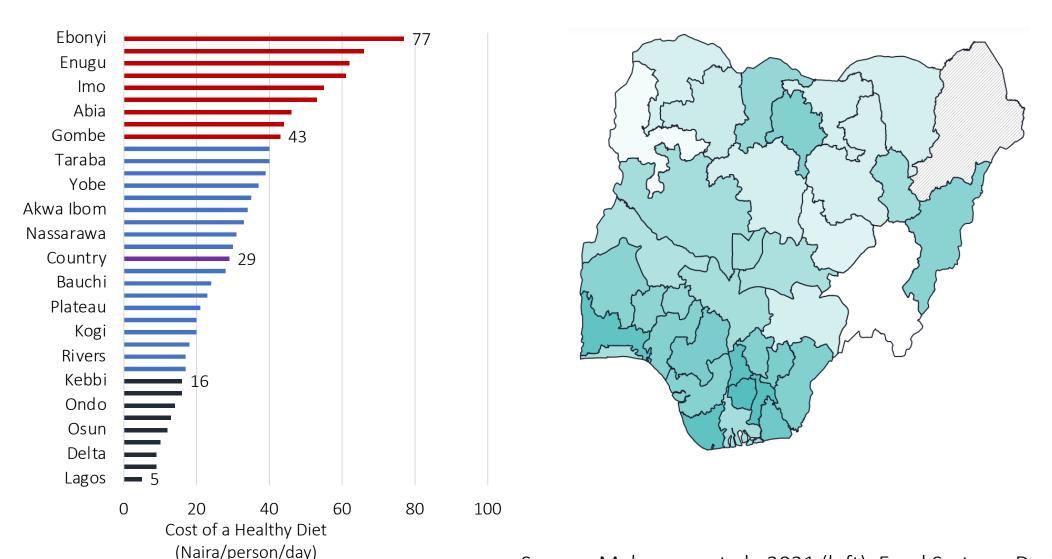
 Reducing & stabilizing cost of a healthy diet is important for consumers and farmers who use markets to complement what they grow





Source: Bai, Naumova and Masters (2020)

Example sub-national results from Nigeria



Source: Mekonnen et al., 2021 (left), Food Systems Dashboard (right).



Different models in each country

• Ethiopia:

- Collaboration: Ethiopian Statistical Service and Ethiopian Public Health Institute
- Output: Quarterly bulletin

Ghana

- Collaboration: Ministry of Food and Agriculture (prices) and Ghana Statistics Service (affordability)
- Output: Quarterly bulletin

Pakistan

- Collaboration: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- Output: State of Food and Nutrition Insecurity in Pakistan (POFI)

Nigeria

- Nigerian Bureau of Statistics leading
- Output: Subnational Food Systems Dashboard, Governor's Scorecard



Reporting and dissemination options

Reporting Scope:

Frequency

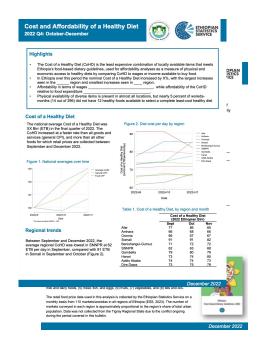
- Monthly
- Quarterly

Geographic level

- Market
- District
- Region

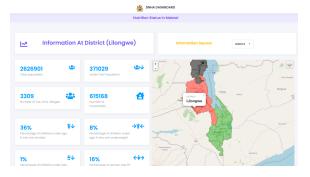
Reporting Formats:

Newsletter or Bulletin

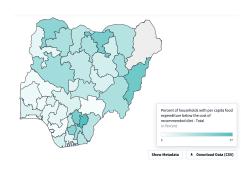


Example: Ethiopia, Ghana

Data Dashboard



Example: DNHA Dashboard



Example: Nigeria

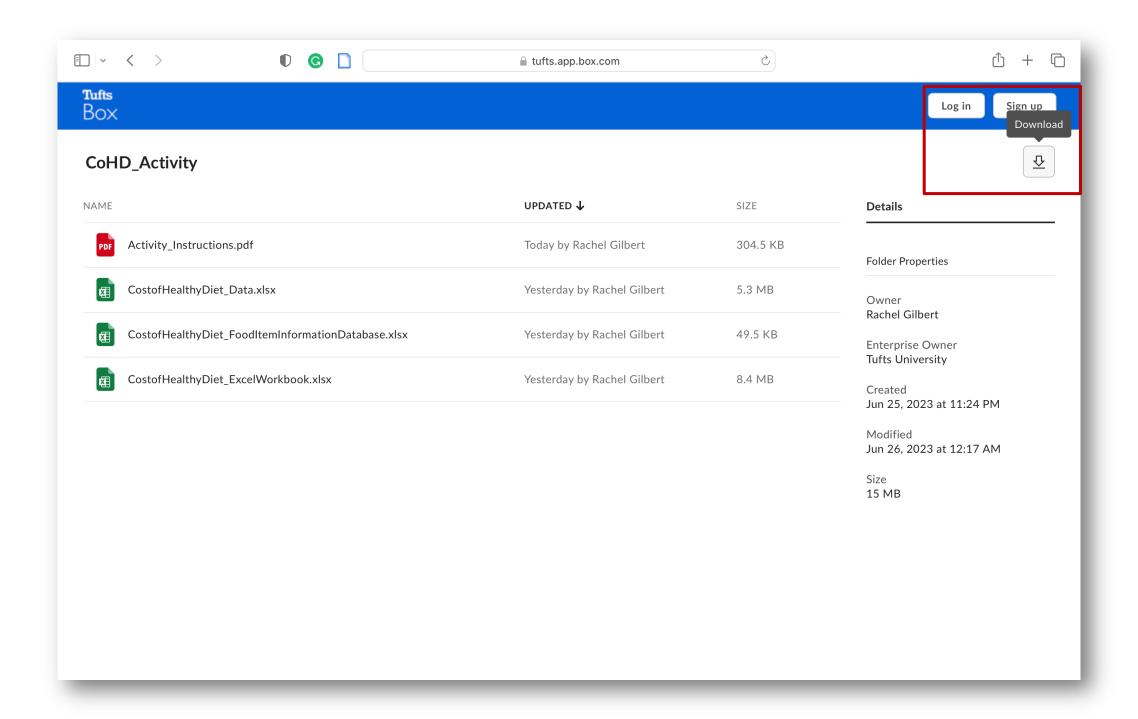
Mailing Lists



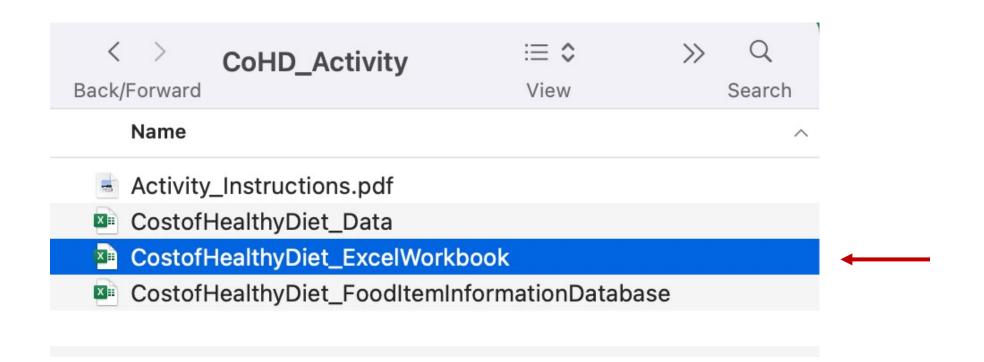


Demonstration: Calculating the Cost of a Healthy Diet

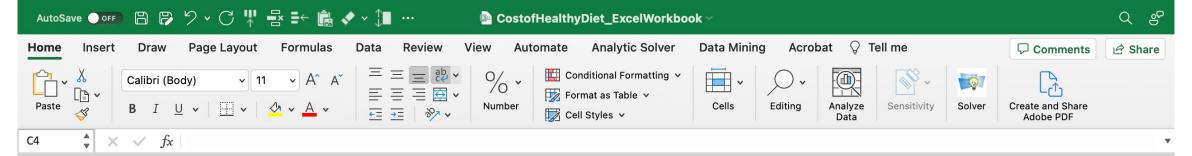




Find folder in Downloads, open Excel Workbook







Cost of a Healthy Diet Excel Workbook

Version 5.0

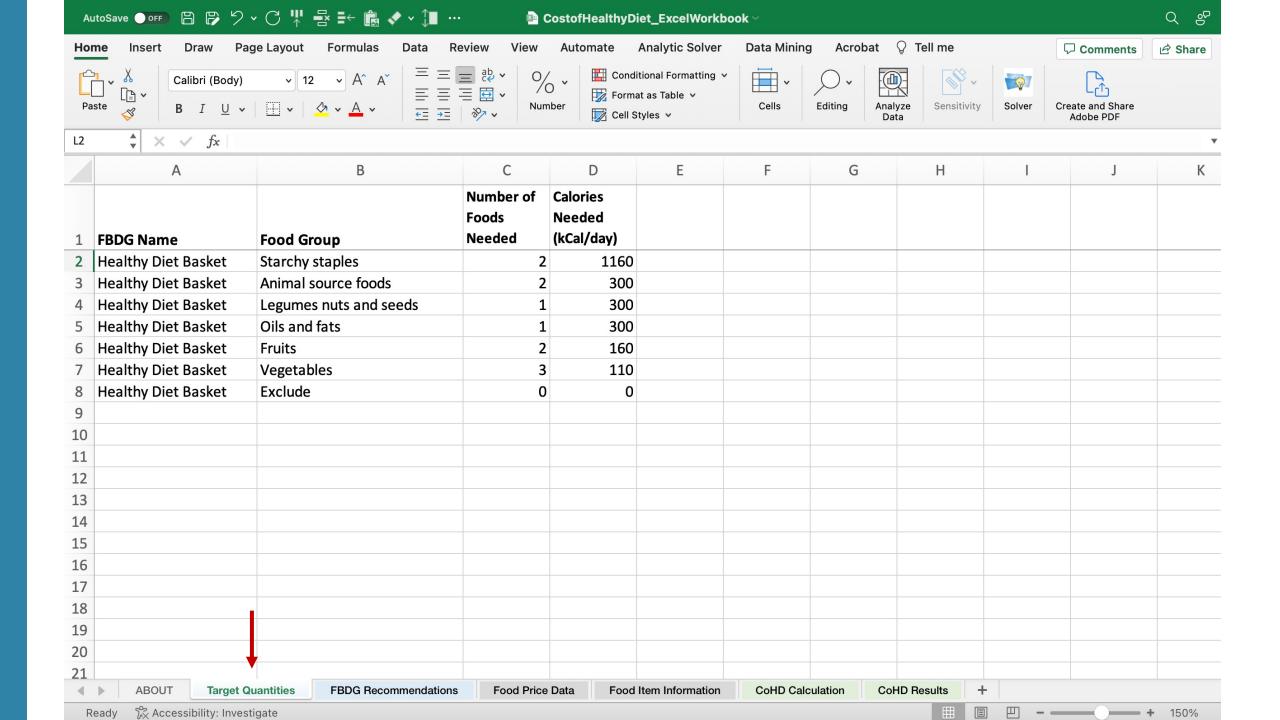
This workbook provides a template for calculating the *Cost of a Healthy Diet* indicator. It can be used with standard food price datasets from a national statistical agency or market information service, and is based on either global Healthy Diet Basket (HDB) targets or your own national Food-Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDGs). The workbook contains formulas that connect data across sequential sheets and generate *Cost of a Healthy Diet* results for each time and place. Designed for standalone use or integration into your pre-existing data analysis process.

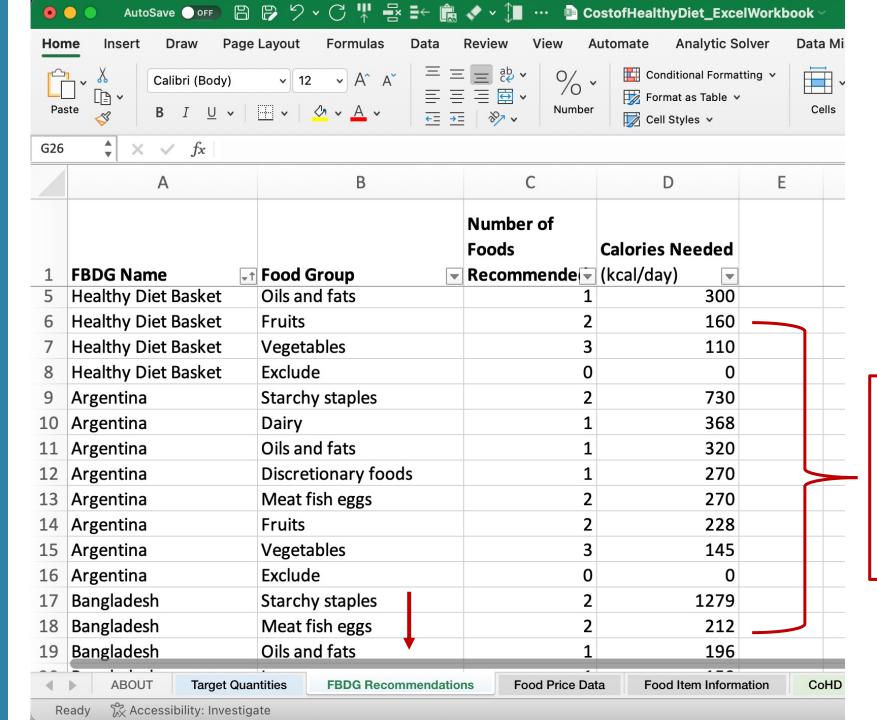
The worksheets follow five steps of diet cost computation:

- (1) Define Target Quantities of each food group, by selecting one of the national FBDGs or the global HDB (in the FBDG Recommendations sheet)
- (2) Prepare your food price observations in rows and columns using the format provided, and paste into the Food Price Data sheet
- (3) Complete your food composition matching (dietary energy and edible portion) for each item in the Food Item Information sheet
- (4) Check the final item selections computed by formulas in the CoHD Calculation sheet, and
- (5) Check the resulting cost per day computed by pivot tables in the **CoHD Results** sheet.

For more information about how to use this Excel Workbook, please refer to the Instructions document included in your download. This workbook was developed by Rachel Gilbert, Kristina Sokourenko, Aishwarya Venkat, and William A. Masters, and Anna Herforth as part of the Food Prices for Nutrition project at Tufts University. You can provide feedback by emailing Rachel Gilbert at rachel.gilbert@tufts.edu.

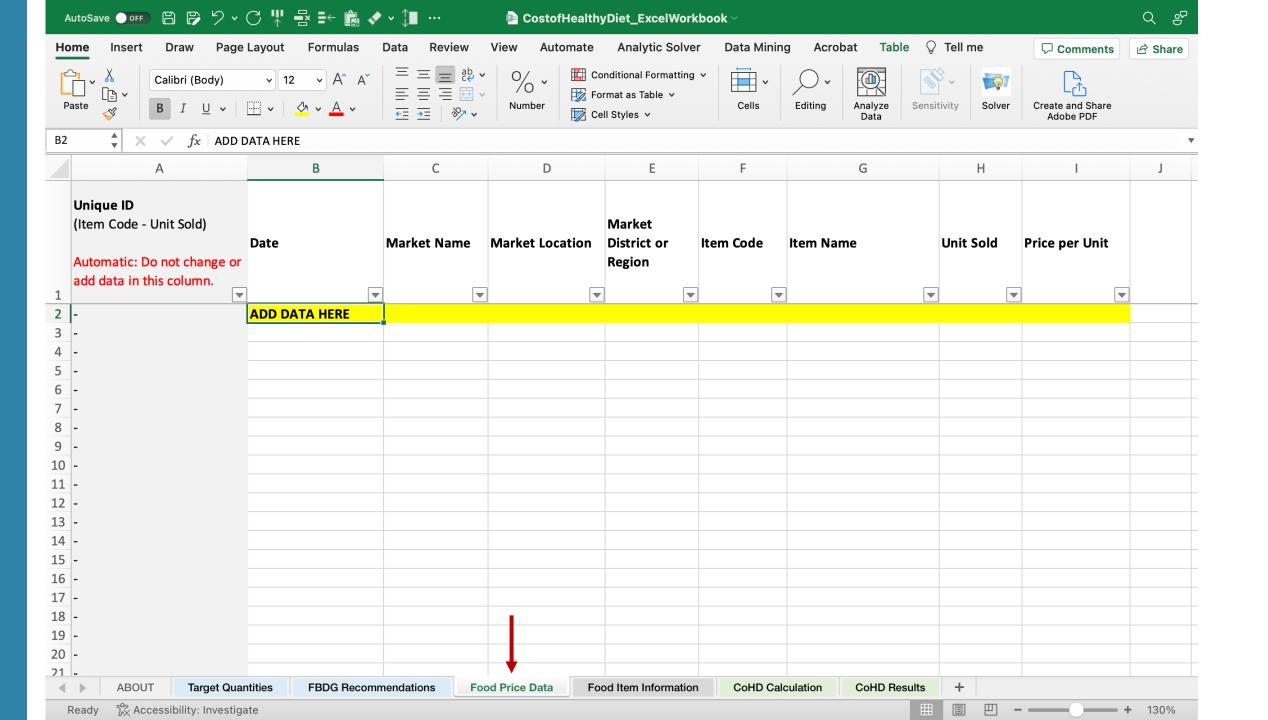
Required citation: Food Prices for Nutrition. (2023) *Technical Assistance Tools for Calculating the Cost of a Healthy Diet, Version 5.0*. Published May 2023. Tufts University, Boston (USA). Available at: https://sites.tufts.edu/foodpricesfornutrition/tools/



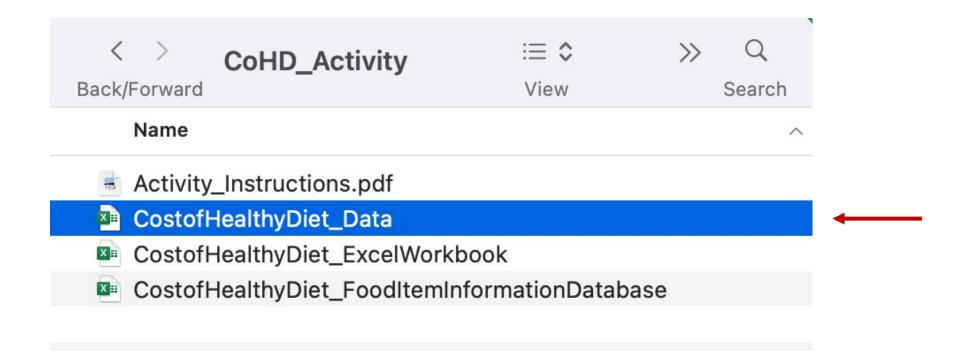


FBDG Recommendations sheet has various quantified FBDGs to choose from

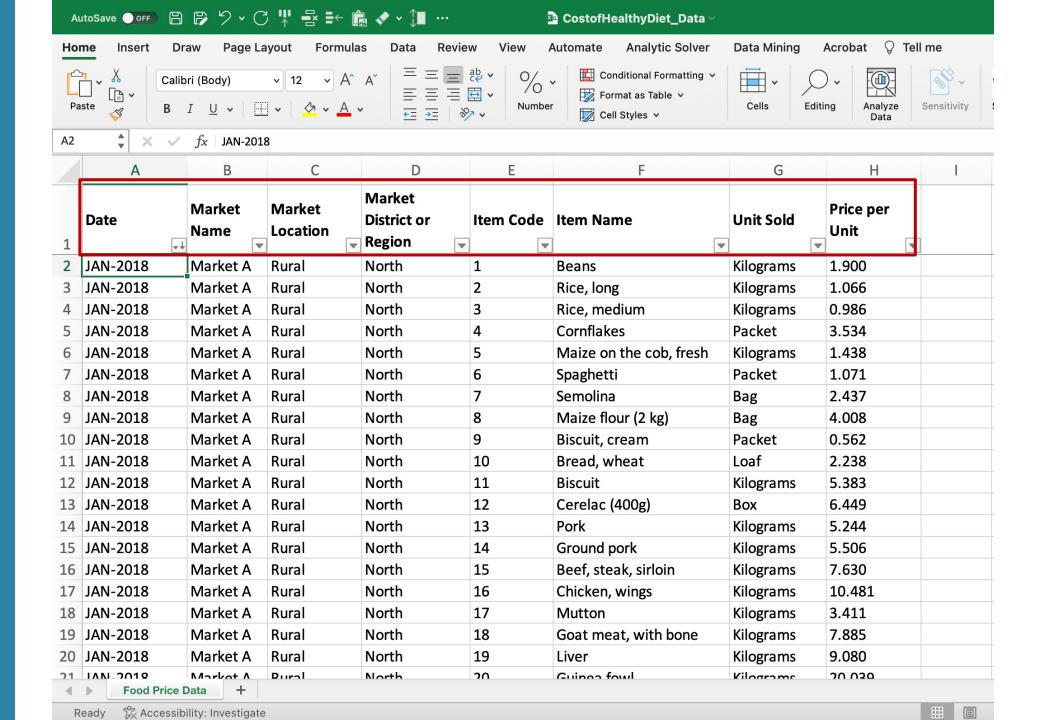
Copy and paste into Target Quantities to choose FBDG

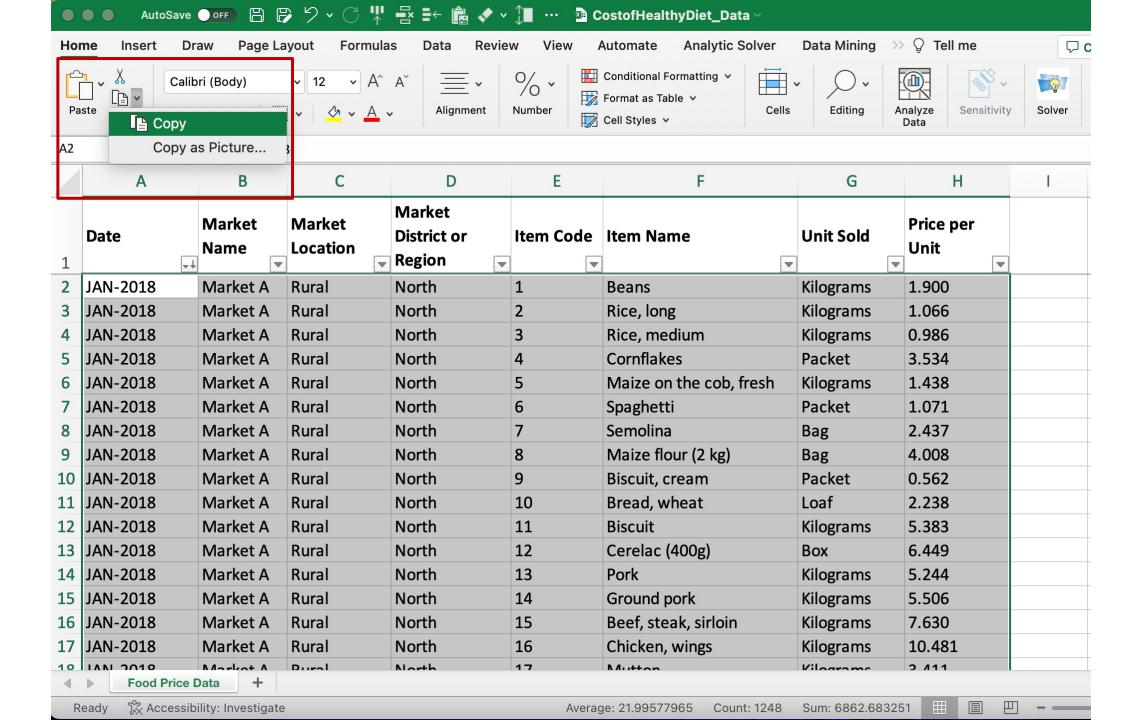


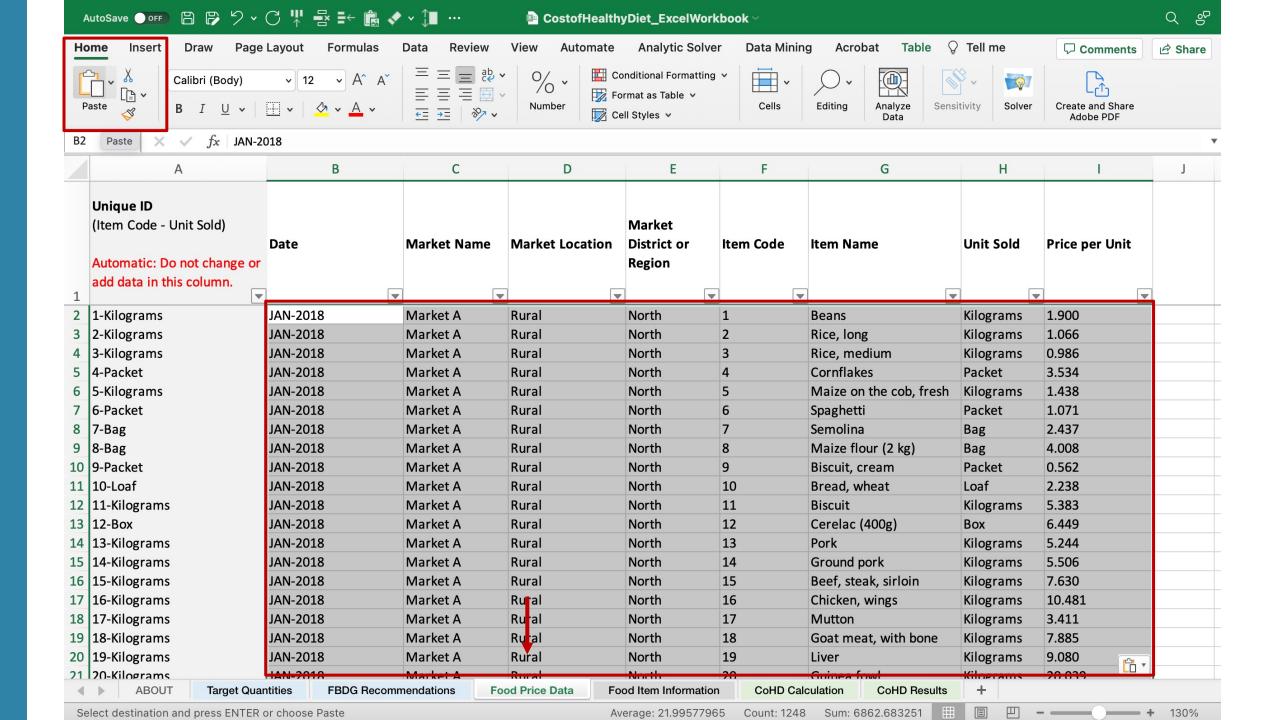
Add price data

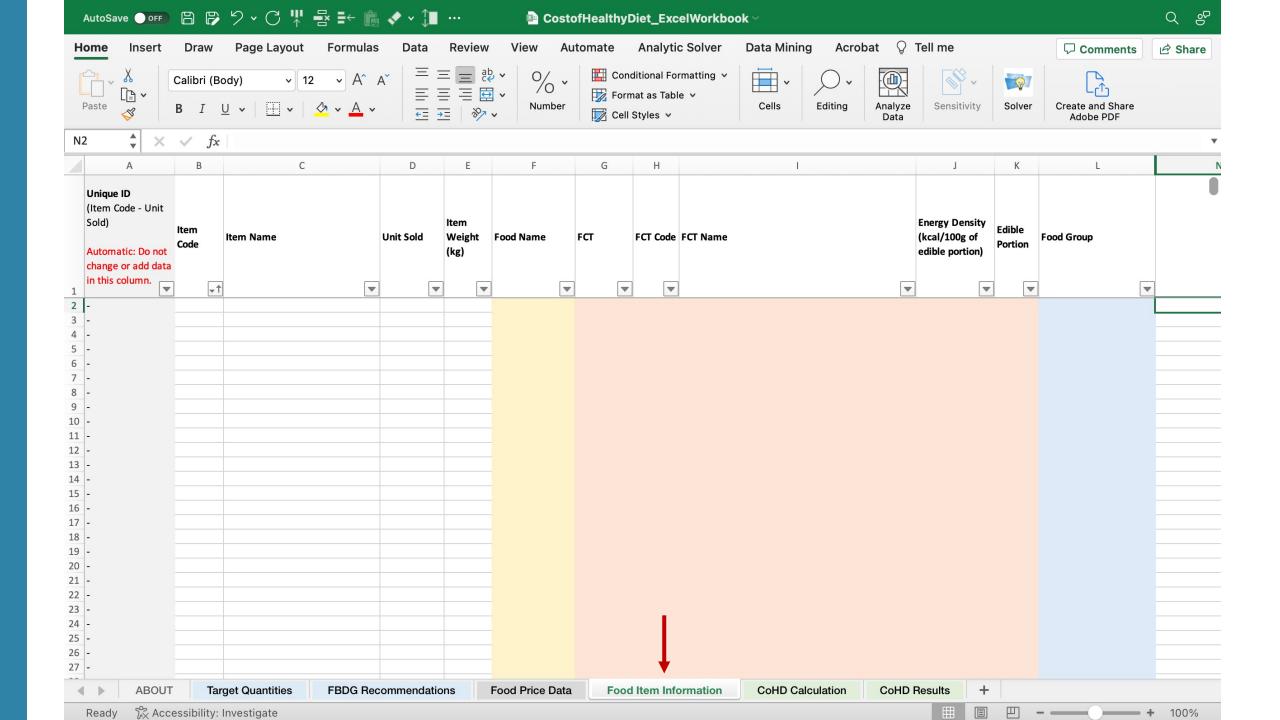


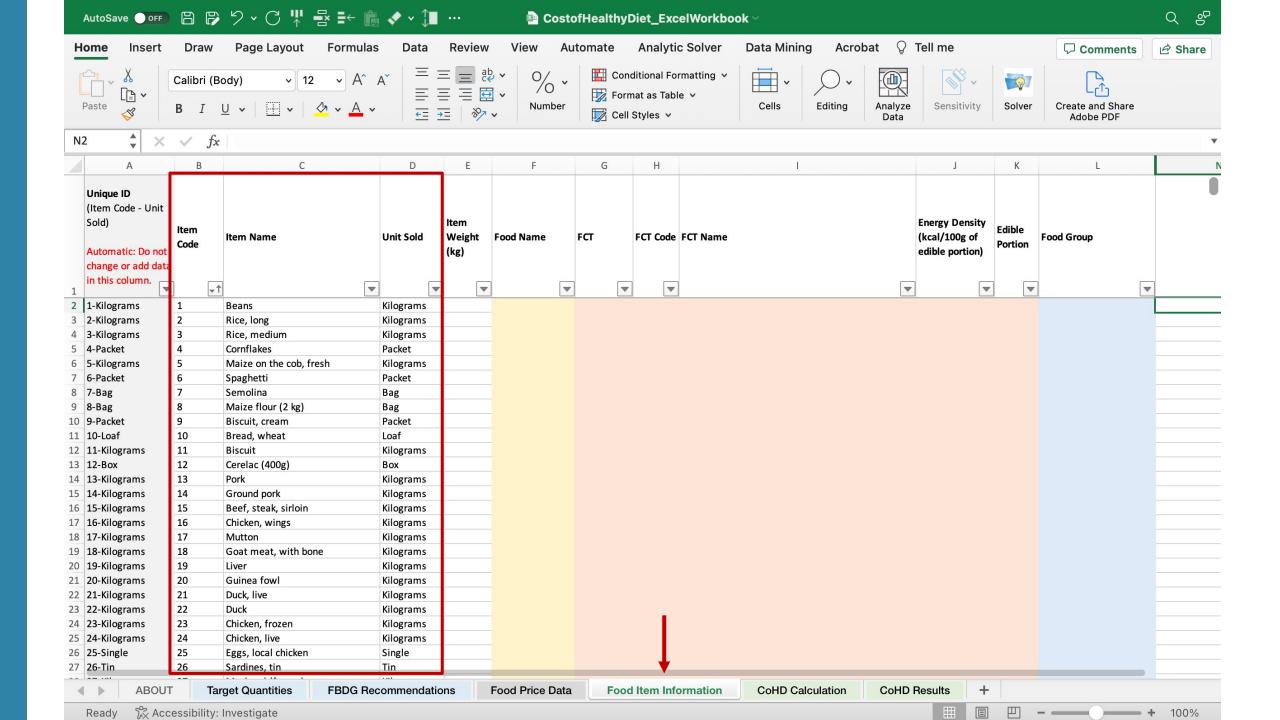


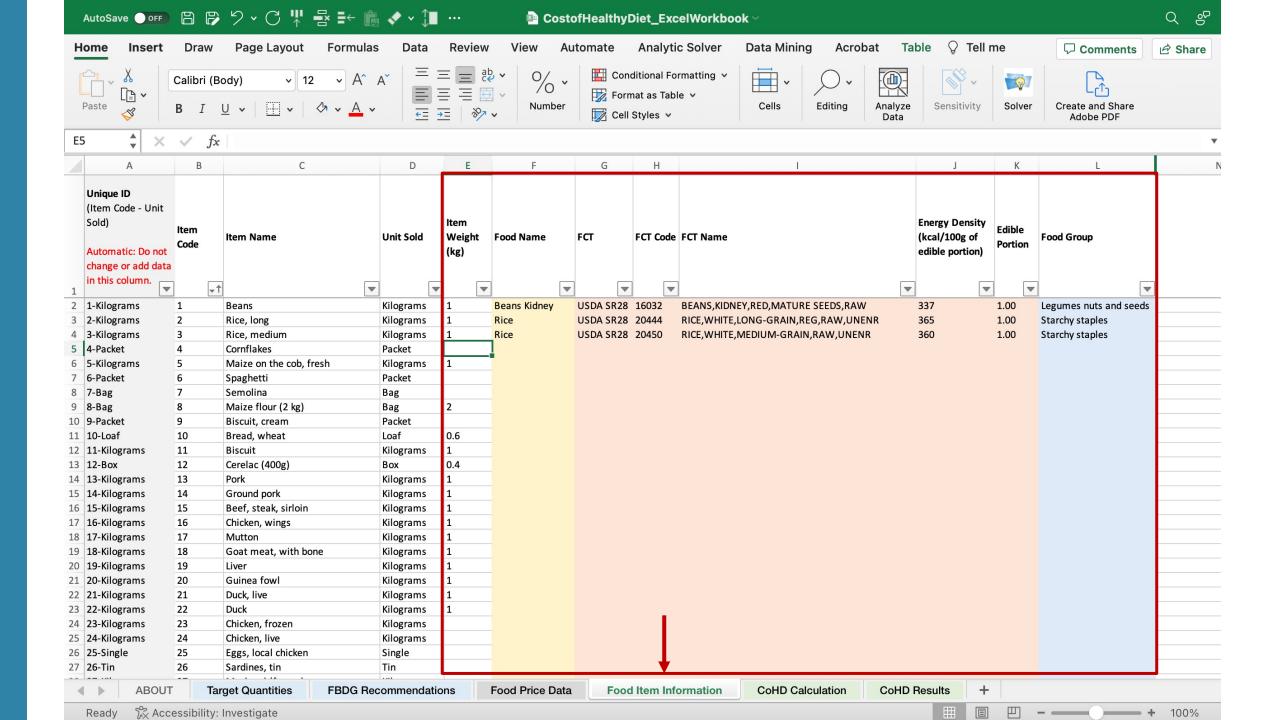




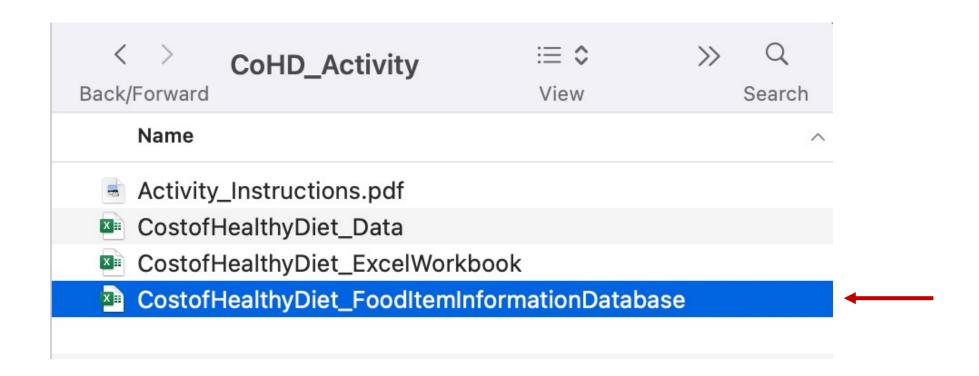




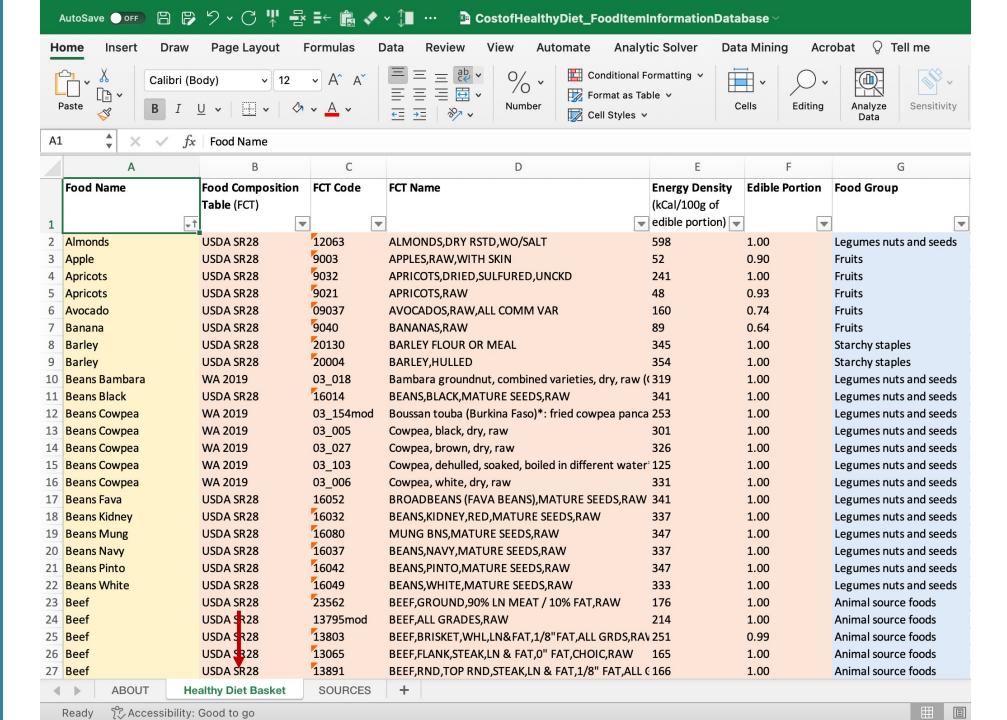




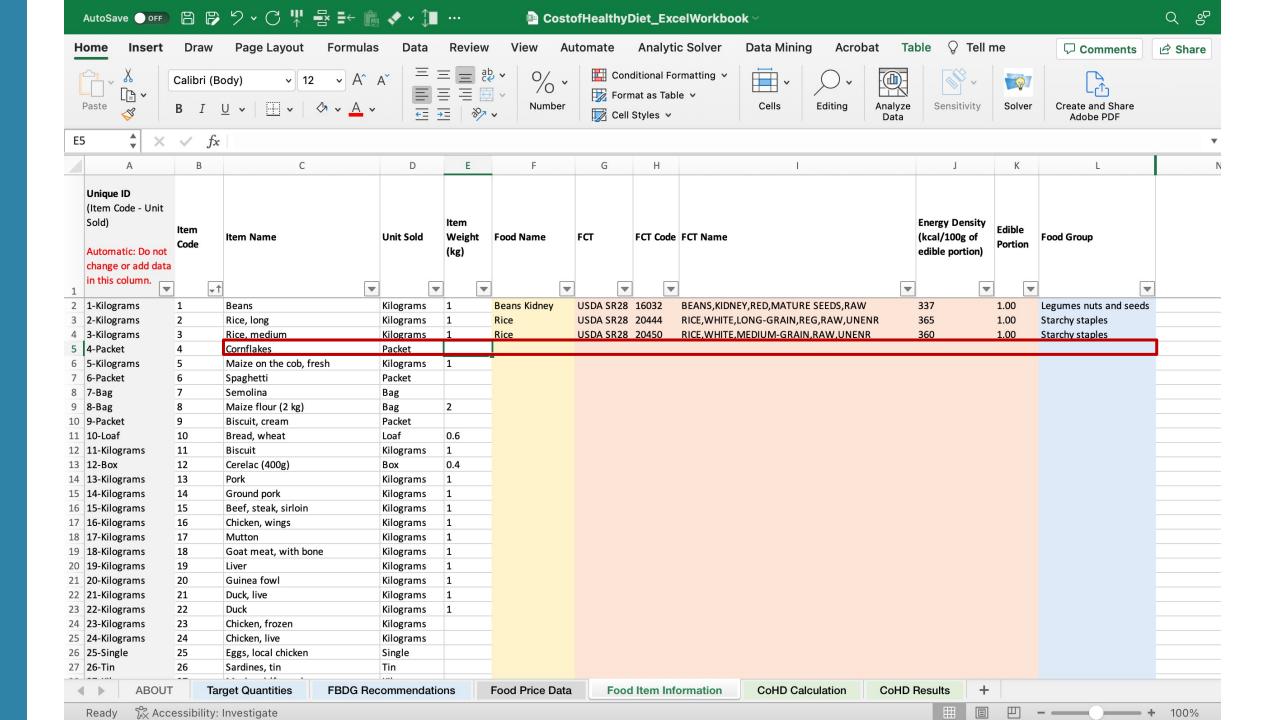
Food Item Information Database helps you match items to their food composition

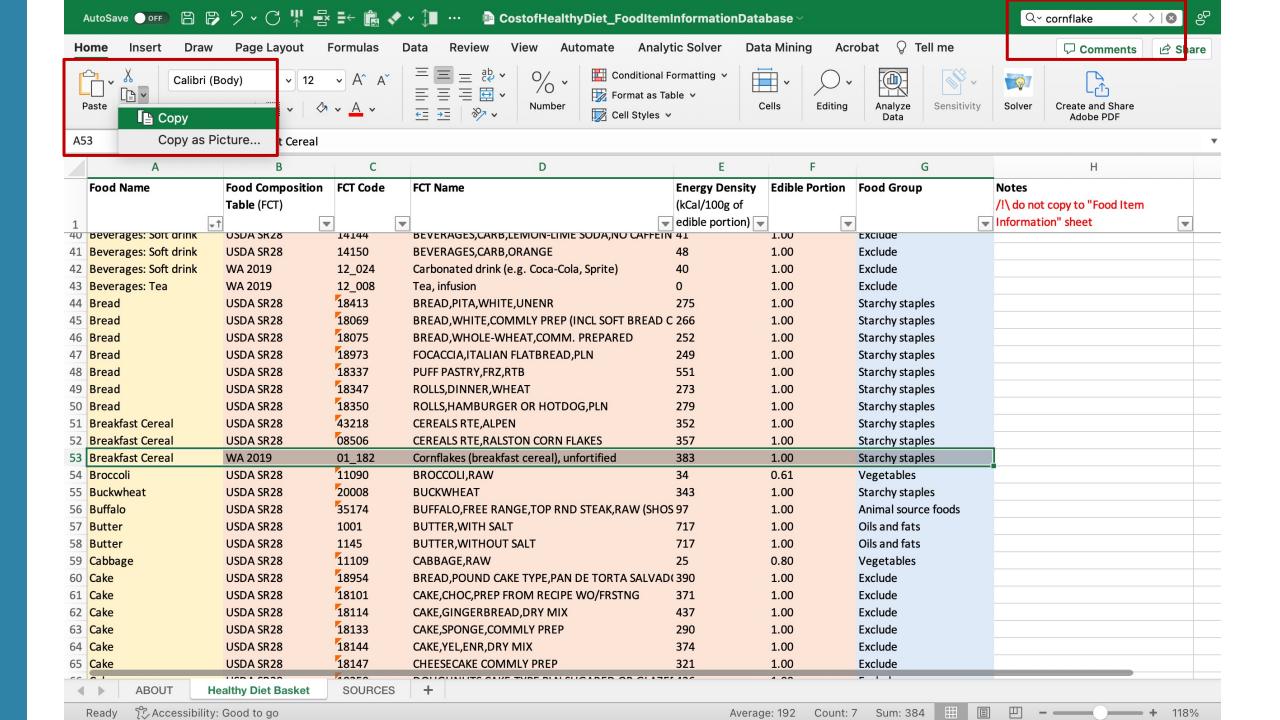


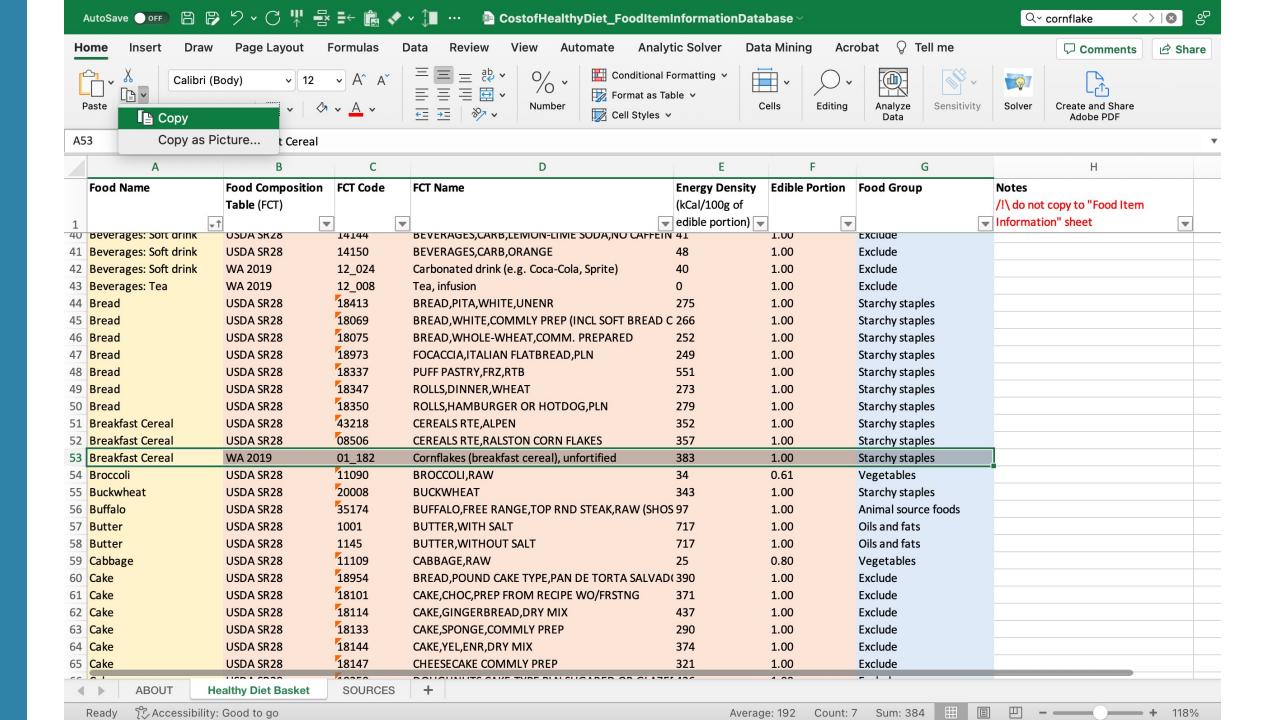


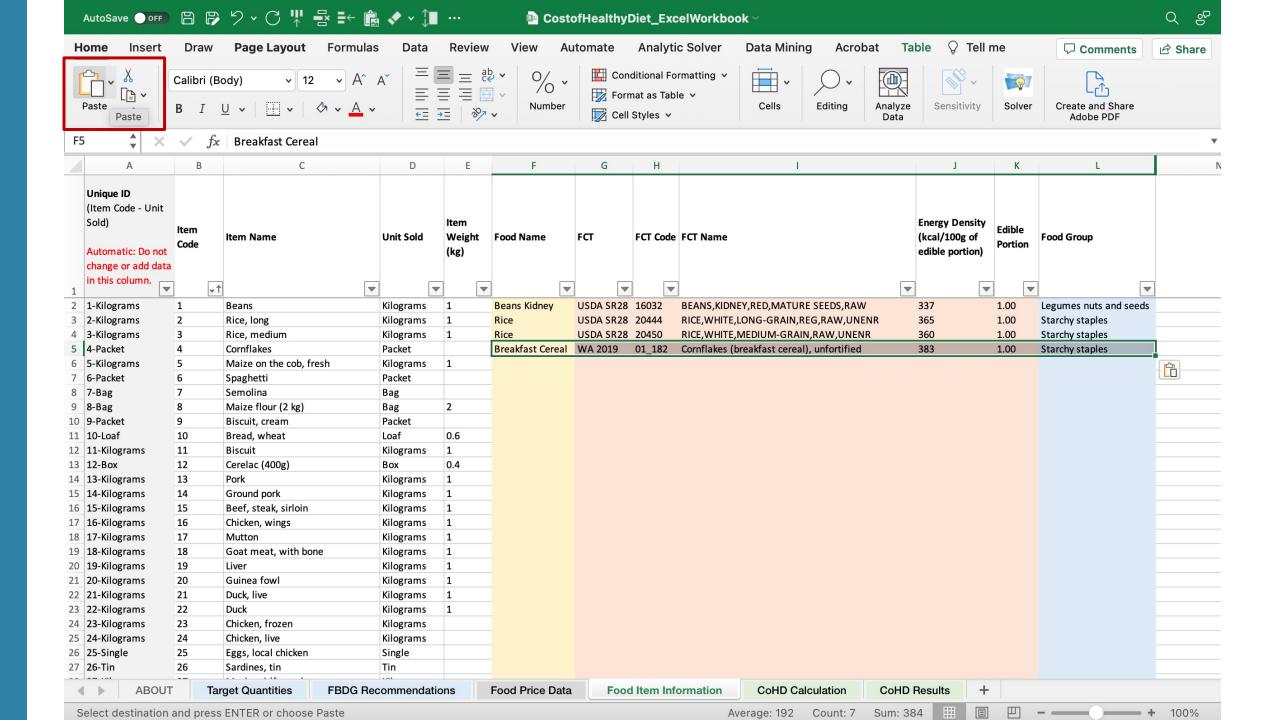


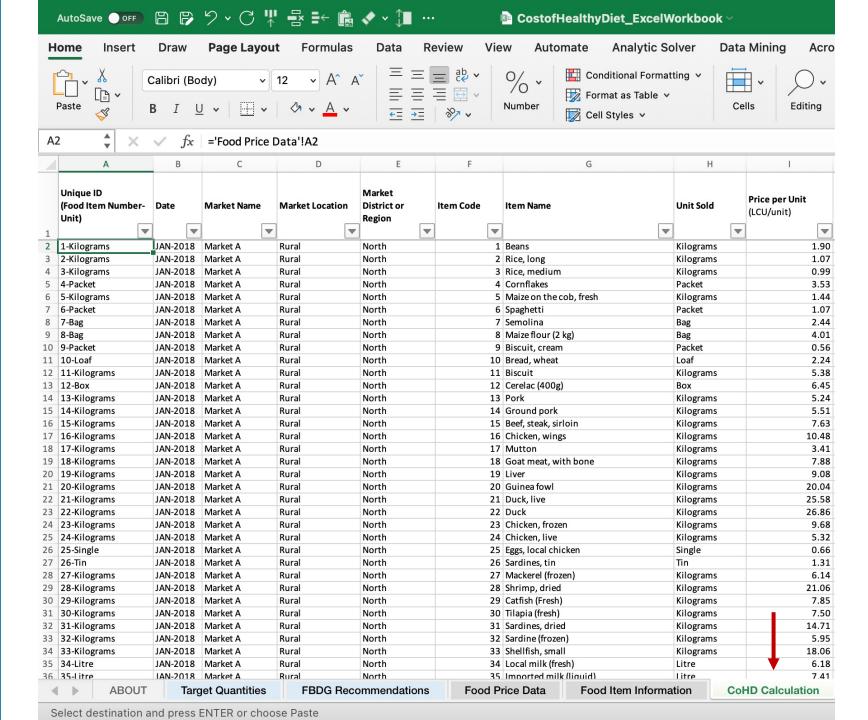
- Helps you
 match a food
 from your
 retail food
 price list to its
 energy density
 (calories per
 100 g) and
 edible portion
- Includes 400+
 foods
 commonly
 found in food
 price lists



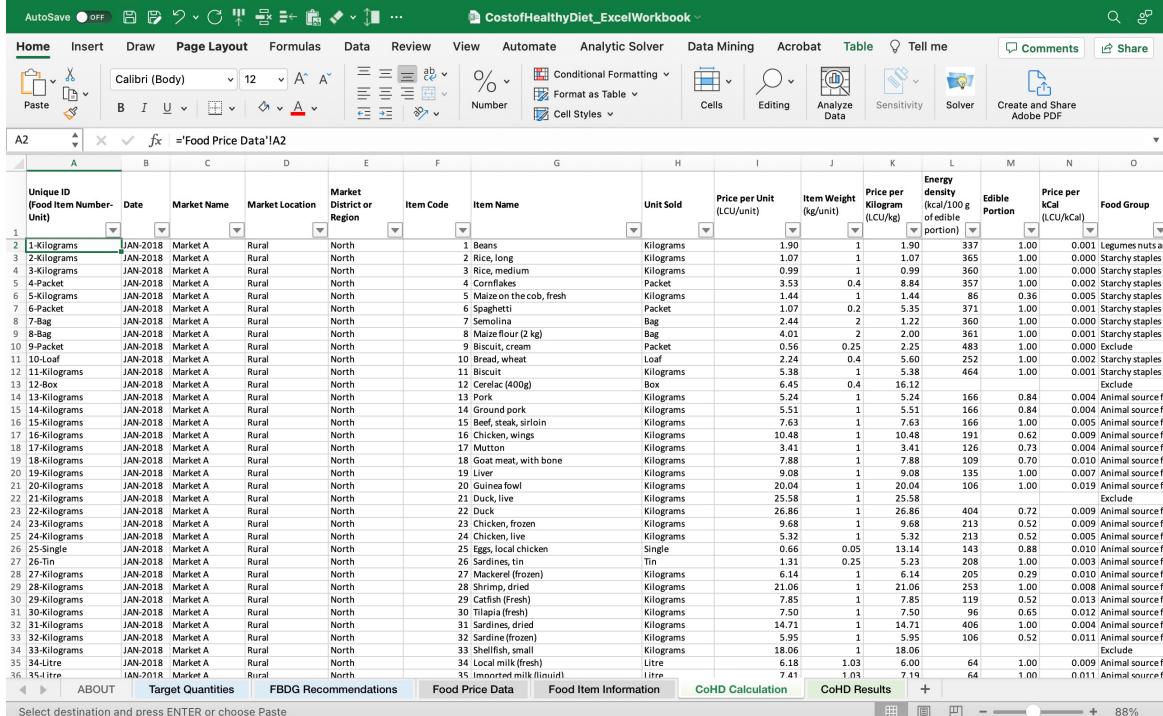


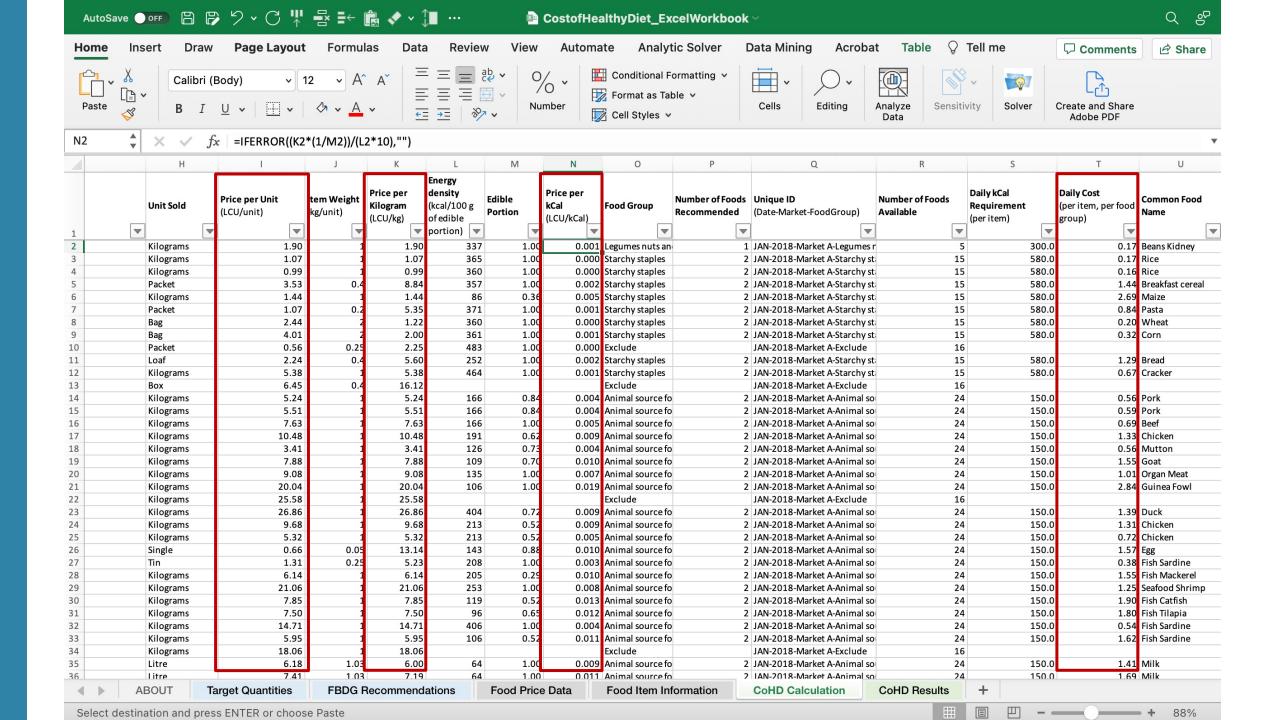


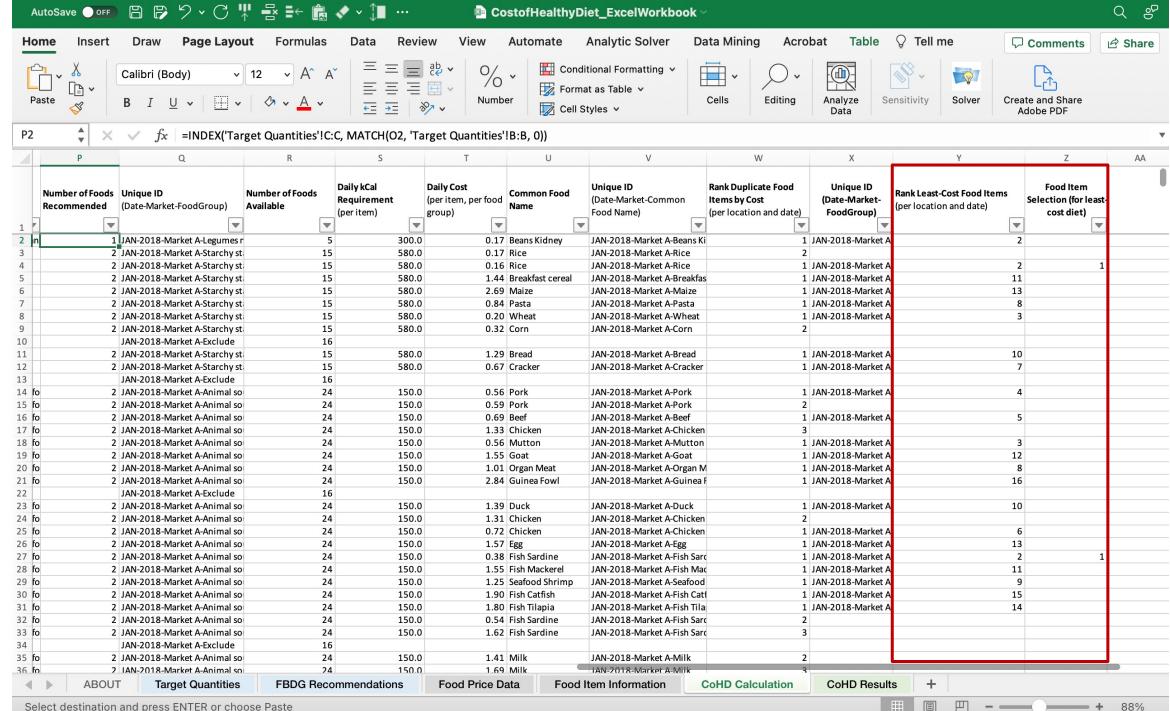


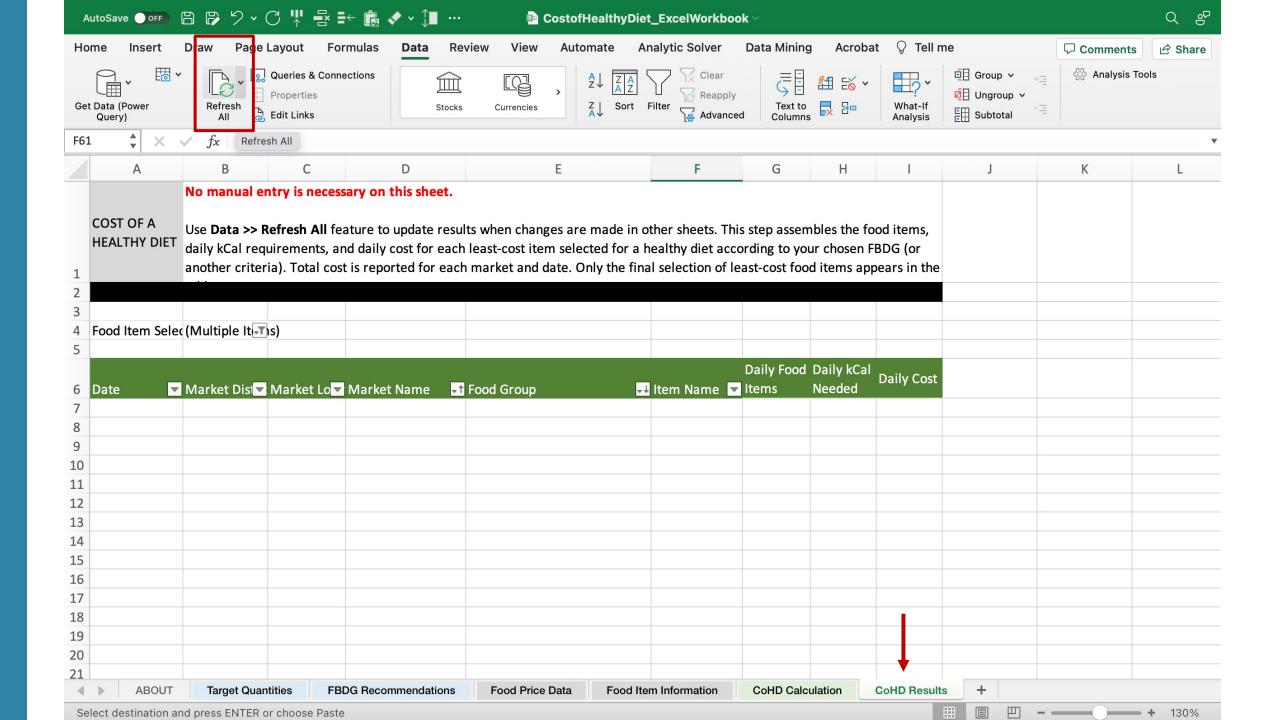


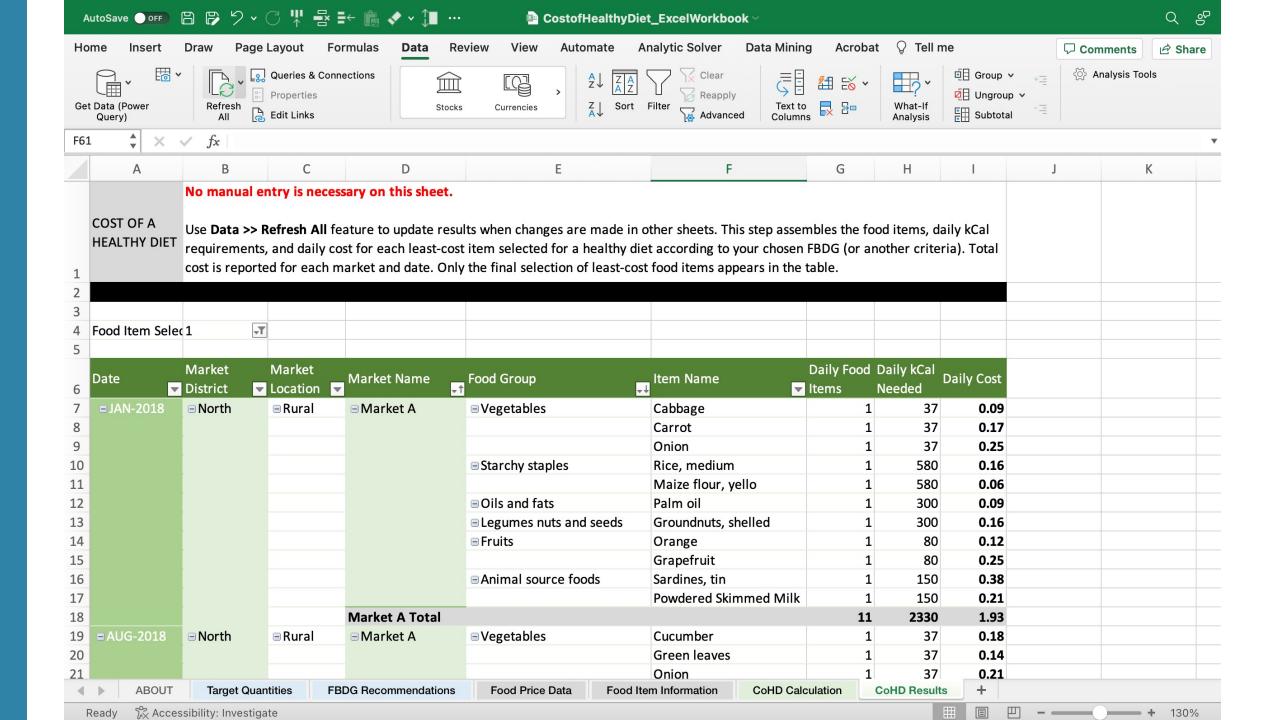
- CoHD calculation compiles, or merges, information from previous sheets
- Contains all formulas to select the least-cost items at each time and place
- No new formulas or data needed here

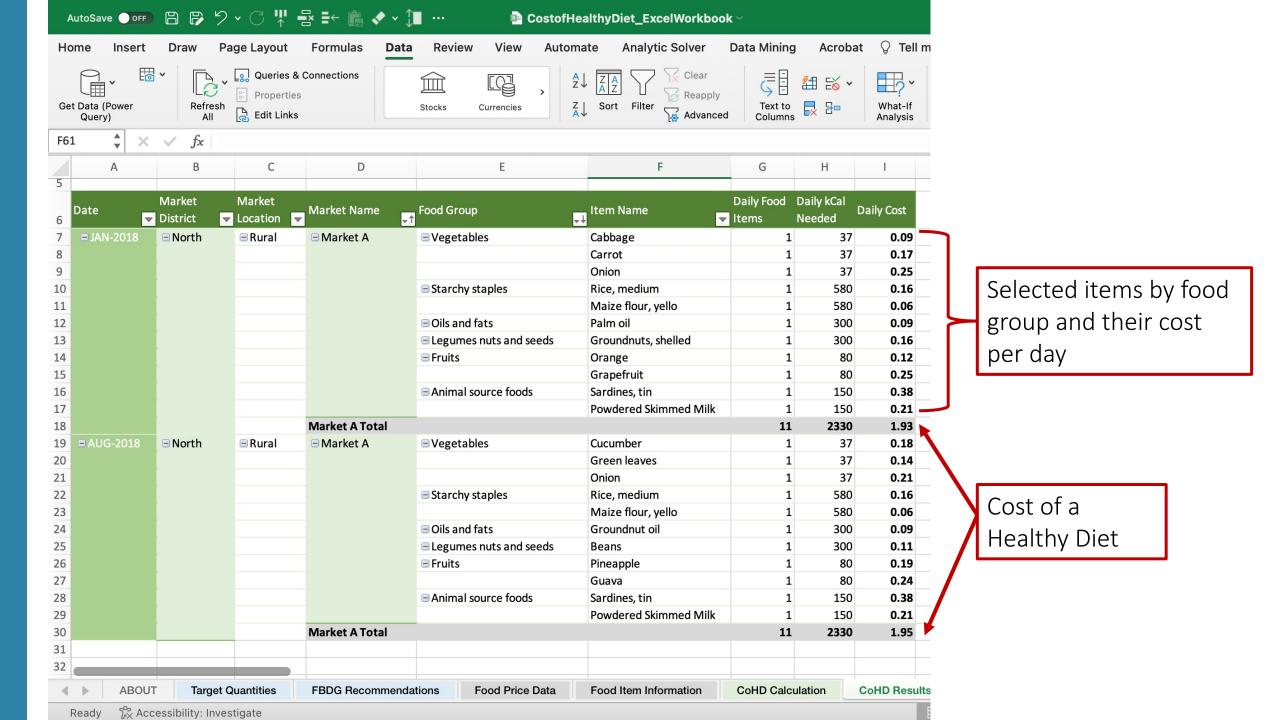












Activity: Practice calculating CoHD in Excel

http://bit.ly/Malawi CoHD Activity



Cost of a Healthy Diet: tools for calculating

INSTRUCTIONS	Visual step-by-step protocol
EXCEL WORKBOOK	Excel Workbook to calculate Cost of a Healthy Diet. Generates pivot table of results.
EXCEL FOOD ITEM INFORMATION DATABASE	Database of food composition data for 400+ common items found in national food price datasets.
STATA CODE	Stata code to calculate the Cost of a Healthy Diet. Generates results and simple summary statistics and figures.

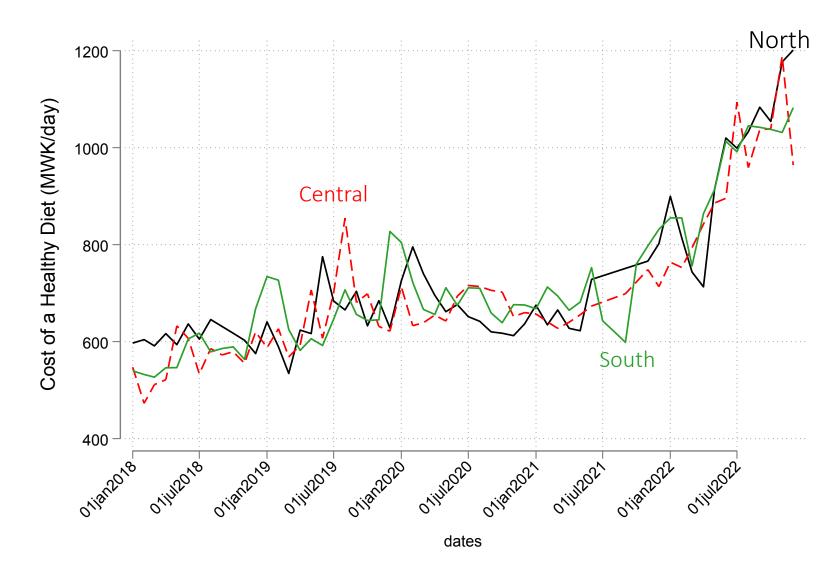




Cost of a Healthy Diet in Malawi:
Preliminary results



CoHD using NSO retail food prices, by region



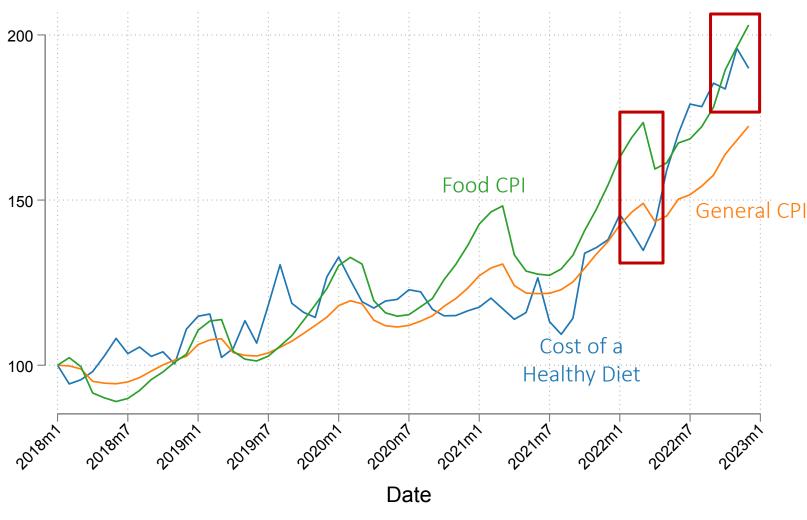
- CoHD increased sharply in all regions beginning around July 2021
- National average CoHD ~
 960 MWK in 2022
- Latest data from Dec 2022; real-time monitoring needed



Food prices and CoHD increased more than all goods

 Indexed values to compare change since 2018

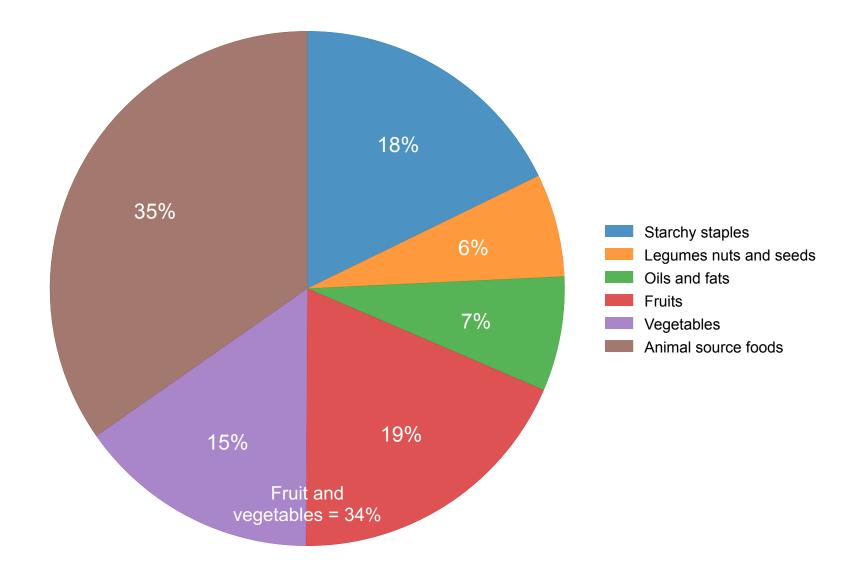
 Food CPI contains a larger number of items and accounts for preferences with expenditure weights



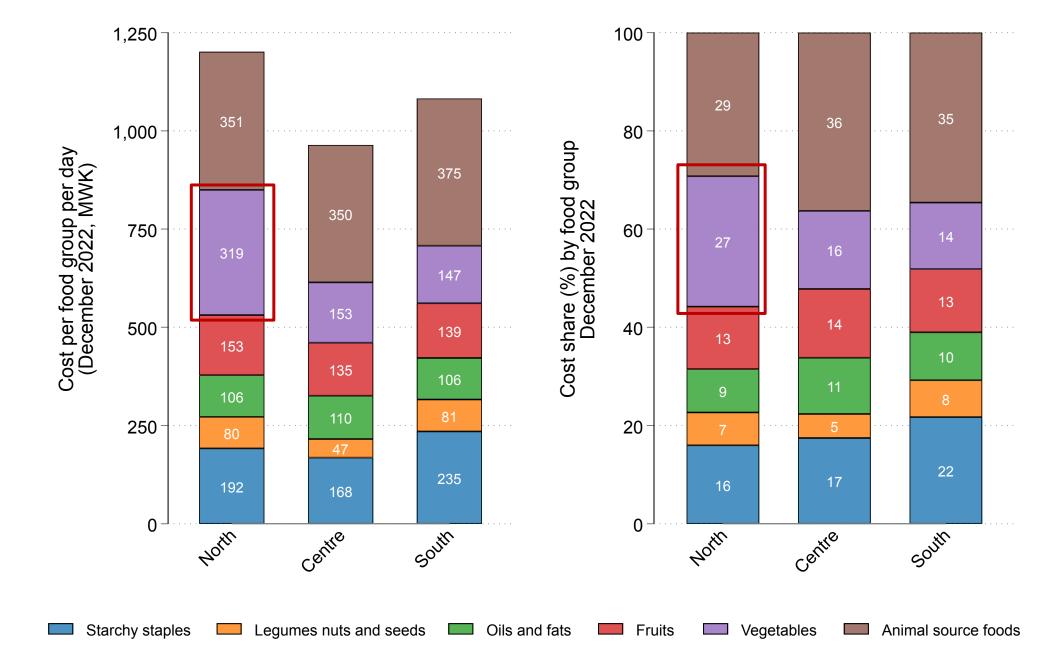
^{*} All values rescaled (1/2018 = 100)

National average cost share by food group

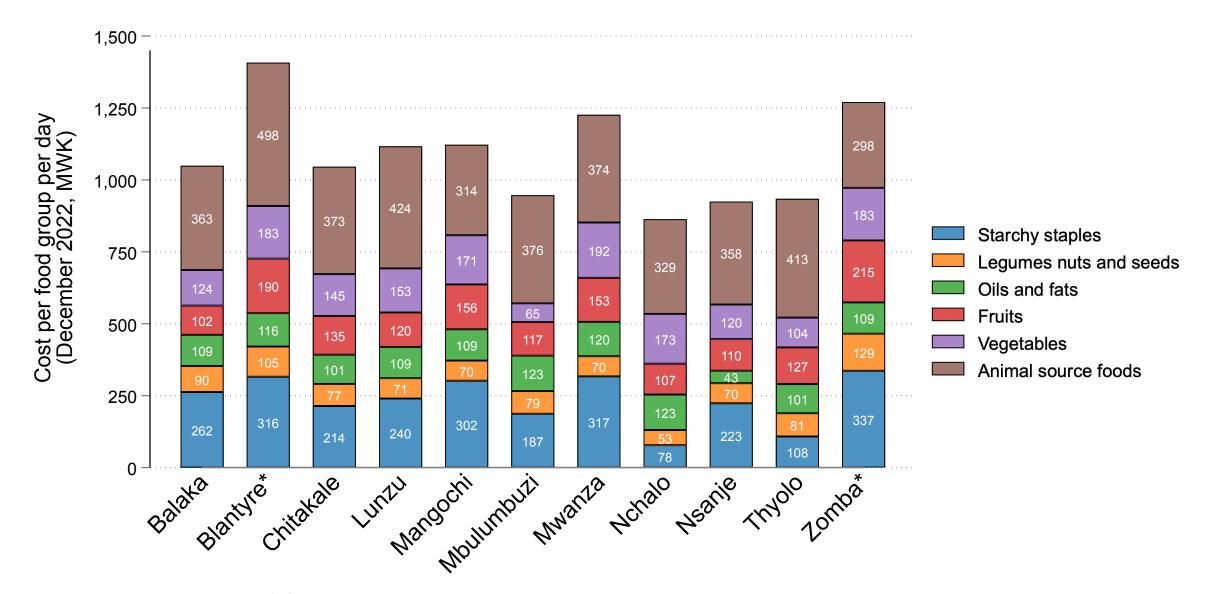
- Animal-source foods account for 35% of the total cost
- Fruits and vegetables account for another 34%
- Fruits and starchy staples are food groups are similar in terms of cost share
 - Fruits due to cost per calorie
 - Starchy staples due to calories contributed



Meeting vegetable requirement is more costly in North



Markets results reveal more variation



^{*} High and medium SES markets.

Least-cost diets in different markets, December 2022

	Balaka		Chilumba		Kasungu	
Food group	Least-cost item(s)	CoHD (MWK/day)	Least-cost item(s)	CoHD (MWK/day)	Least-cost item(s)	CoHD (MWK/day)
Animal source foods	Milk, Ching'ombe	193	Pork	170	Milk, Ching'ombe	201
	,					
Animal source foods	Pork	170	Powdered milk	162	Pork	170
Fruits	Avocado	38	Banana	127	Banana	71
Fruits	Mango	64			Guava	70
Legumes nuts and seeds	Cowpea (khobwe)	90	Soyabeans	99	Groundnut, flour	10
Oils and fats	Cooking oil, refill	109	Cooking oil, refill	109	Cooking oil, refill	112
Starchy staples	Finger millet (mawere)	215	Finger millet (mawere)	172	Maize, grain	32
Starchy staples	Maize, grain	48	Maize, grain	48	Potato, sweet	143
Vegetables	Cabbage	37	Cabbage	73	Cabbage	35
Vegetables	Nkhwani	43	Nkhwani	60	Onion	39
Vegetables	Tanaposi (rape)	44	Onion	55	Tanaposi (rape)	53
Total		1049		1073		937

Common least-cost items in each food group



Starchy staples

- Maize grain
- Rice
- Sweet potato



Legumes nut and seeds

- Groundnuts flour or shelled
- Soyabeans
- Pigeon pea



Oils and fats

- Cooking oil
- Margarine



Fruits

- Banana
- Avocado
- Mango



Vegetables

- Tanaposi (rape)
- Cabbage
- Nkhwani



Animal source foods

- Pork
- Liquid milk
- Usipa