

PRACTICAL VIEWPOINTS

SOME ASPECTS OF FOOD SECURITY/ INSECURITY OF UKRAINIAN SOCIETY: THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIMENSION

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Abstract: Based on the analysis of the problems of food security/insecurity, the article proposes some statistical and sociological indicators which, in our opinion, can be a model for studying such phenomena in countries with transition economies. These criteria can be: 1) affordability of food – the share of expenditures on food and non-alcoholic beverages in the total consumer structure of the household; 2) the part of the population that is most food-deprived; this is eloquently evidenced by the lack of financial opportunities for some social groups to purchase the most necessary food products; 3) the difference between the affordable and desired daily ration of an average person. Such criteria are simple, reliable in measurement and easily comparable, providing illustrative material for studies like these, in particular comparative ones. The presented model is most applicable in countries with transition economies due to the relevance of certain socio-economic processes there. Against this background, some of the obstacles associated with food security/insecurity in Ukraine are revealed. Among them, firstly, the relatively low economic availability of food compared to the EU countries; secondly, a certain part of the respondents who have financial problems with the purchase of the most necessary food products; thirdly, some difference between the daily diet and the most desirable foods for consumption, such as fruits, fish, seafood. Despite certain difficulties that are present and have their own specifics in almost every country, Ukraine has recorded a positive trend towards a decrease in the share of household spending on food and non-alcoholic beverages from 64.2 % in 1999 to 46.4 % in the year 2021.

Keywords: food security, food poverty, food products, countries with transition economies, developed countries, global food security index, share of household consumer spending

INTRODUCTION

The process of institutionalization of the concept of food security began during the Second World War, with the aim of solving the problems of hunger and malnutrition at the international level in the neediest countries and regions of the planet. In the process of its development, it has undergone a certain evolution. Even at the present stage, the criteria for food security, both in universal measuring schemes and at the national level, are constantly being refined and differentiated in connection with new challenges. The concept itself has evolved from its original meaning, relating to the food security of entire countries and regions, to a more polyphonic understanding, one of the variants of which takes the form of an emphasis on the purchasing power of the household, especially in countries with transition economies. In this regard, the most relevant are indicators related to economic, material, and financial issues in the life of an average family and, consequently, to the ability of its members to eat well and lead a healthy lifestyle, as well as to have favorable opportunities for multifaceted self-realization.

One of the aspects of the present problem of interest to us, in the scientific literature, is denoted by the terms, food poverty and food insecurity, which are often used interchangeably. Food poverty is a complex phenomenon influenced by many different factors. The most systemic aspect concerns the availability of food and drink, their caloric content, as well as their quality, quantity, and access to them, which can significantly affect the level and quality of life in households. It should be emphasized that, first and foremost, this phenomenon is the result of the socio-economic, geographical and social contexts in which people live (O'Connor & Farag & Baines 2016). The main purpose of this article is to identify the most relevant indicators for the analysis of food poverty in countries with transition economies, and, based on the results of empirical sociological research, to identify typical socio-economic problems of food security/insecurity at the regional level in Ukraine.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

In the English-language scientific literature, the study of food issues in 2021 took place in the following areas: the impact of food consumption on human health; food production and its impact on the environment; various regions and nations. Also, food security problems were analyzed according to such dimensions as supply and demand for food, pricing policy, international trade, and the evolution of the concept of food security (Savary et al. 2022).

In Ukraine, mostly economists suggest, among others, singling out the following indicators of the country's food security: first, the availability of high-quality and safe food products; second, the energy value of a person's diet – in 2020 this is 2,691 kcal per person per day, while in EU countries this indicator is set within 3,400–3,500 kcal.; a certain ratio in the diet of animal and vegetable products, i.e. a person should receive 55.0 % of the daily requirement of kilocalories from food of animal origin; third, the economic affordability of food; fourthly, the stability of the food market and the level of its independence; fifthly the development of the agro-food sector; sixthly, natural resource potential and efficiency of its use, etc. (Rumyk 2013; 2020). Nevertheless, today, against this background, the most universal approach for assessing the food security of a country is the Global Food Security Index, which has been successfully used in comparative studies.

It is logical that at the present stage food security is reduced, in particular in countries with transition economies, and that it is evaluated through the prism of the level of consumption and purchasing power of households, their material and financial capabilities. The variety of indicators, both objective and subjective, somewhat complicates, schematizes and sometimes leads away from the essence of the phenomenon, from what should be given priority. To avoid this, it will be interesting to look at food security/insecurity in Ukraine, including at the regional level, with the help of several relevant statistical and sociological indicators. In our opinion, these should be: 1) economic affordability of food products – the share of expenditures on food and non-alcoholic beverages in the total consumer structure of the household; 2) the proportion of the most deprived population in terms of food, which can be eloquently indicated by the lack of financial opportunities for some social groups to purchase the most necessary food products; 3) the difference between the available and desired daily diet of an average person. These criteria are simple, reliable in measurement and easily comparable, providing valid illustrative material for comparative studies of the socio-economic dimension of food security/insecurity in countries with transition economies.

METHODOLOGY

For this work, some parts of the material of the sociological research “Features of the gastronomic culture of modern Ukrainian society (on the example of the great city – the Dnipro)” were used. Its preparation and implementation were carried out directly by the author of the article. The research was focused on the study of the culinary, social and economic order of the gastronomic culture of the

city. The goal was to identify the characteristic features of the eating practices of citizens. The empirical study was conducted from December 1 to December 31, 2021. For the study, the sample population was formed in compliance with the relevant quotas, using the random selection method at the last stage. The sample – 400 respondents – is representative of the adult population of the city. Quotas were used to select respondents by age and gender in accordance with the author's own calculations, while accounting for the available statistical indicators for the city. The age categories of respondents were divided as follows: in the age range 18–29 years – 16% were interviewed; 30–39 years – 16%; 40–49 – 20%; 50–59 years – 21%; 60 years or more – 27%. In general, 45% of respondents in the sample were men and 55% women.

The survey was conducted by the method of question and response. Specifically, a selective personal questionnaire was chosen, which allowed, in a relatively short period of time, to obtain an assessment of certain aspects of food security and modern gastronomic culture at the regional level, while accounting for indicators of mass consciousness that are important for the researcher.

ANALYSIS

Obviously, people live the way they eat. Food security is a situation in which all people have physical and economic access to sufficient and safe food to lead an active and healthy life. The absence of such opportunities is commonly referred to as food poverty. In the modern world, food issues are beginning to acquire paramount, vital importance, which is due to both objective and subjective factors. Among them are epidemics, wars, droughts, inflation, corporate selfishness and, as a result, migration flows, socio-economic and political problems etc. Such processes are particularly relevant in developing countries and countries with transition economies. This is expressed in the fact that the majority of the population there, in comparison with developed countries, spends a significant part of their financial resources on food (The World Bank. Food Security Update 2022).

On the one hand, in developed countries nutrition issues are primarily related to economic conditions, social contradictions, climate change and, as a result, gasoline prices. All this affects the ability of supermarkets and supply chains to provide the population with food at the same or increasing prices. Also, against the background of the functioning of the food system, the conversation is about the balance between the economic value of goods, their environmental safety, the health of consumers and their rights (Lang 2020). Moreover, in high-income countries there is unlimited access to high-calorie foods, so problems

overeating some categories of foods, such as meat, fish, products containing a lot of sugar – can lead to obesity in adulthood and later to diabetes, cancer and heart disease. Such diseases significantly contribute to the increase in the mortality rate (Headey & Alderman 2019). Of course, in general terms, all the countries of the rich world can boast of food security, although they have not completely solved the problem of hunger. For some social groups such problems are a consequence of financial restrictions and material deprivation. In this regard, food banks (Australia, Brazil, France, Great Britain, USA) are one of the tools to combat such negative phenomena. In some countries, these banks receive government funding. The first banks of this kind appeared in the United States at the end of the 1960s, spreading in the beginning of the 1980s to Canada, and in the mid-1980s to France. Today institutionalization is taking place in most European countries (Riches 2016). Also, such organizations at the supranational level contribute to the fight against malnutrition and hunger on a global scale through appropriate assistance, primarily to developing countries.

On the other hand, in countries with transition economies, material and financial difficulties for a some social groups hinder achieving a balanced, whole-some diet; sometimes difficulties in accessing high-calorie foods such as fruits, vegetables, dairy products, eggs, meat, and fish, can lead to a delay in mental and physical development, the spread of various diseases, loss of strength, short stature, and lack of important micro- and macro-elements in the human body. All this negatively affects health and increases mortality at an early age (Headey & Alderman 2019).

THE GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY INDEX AND THE SHARE OF CONSUMER EXPENDITURES ON FOOD PRODUCTS AND NON-ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

One of the systemic indicators, particularly of food security and the quality of life of the whole society, is The Global Food Security Index. The index is a dynamic model consisting of 58 indicators that characterize such phenomena in modern countries. The overall goal of studies like these is to rank countries according to their level of food vulnerability (security) at least through four dimensions: affordability; availability; quality and safety; natural resources and resilience (Global Food Security Index. Methodology 2021). In 2021, according to the presented index, Ukraine ranked 58th out of 113 countries. The most affordable food according to one of the criteria of the presented index, which reflects the prices and the relevance of the purchasing power of the population, is in

Denmark, Ireland, Finland, Great Britain and Sweden. Ukraine takes 58th place in accordance with this criterion. In line with the criterion of the quality and safety of food, in relation to the leading places – Canada, USA, Ireland, Finland, Denmark, Ukraine ranks 55th (Global Food Security Index. Rankings and trends 2021).

Because the nature of food security in developing countries and countries with transition economies mainly depends on the socio-economic, that is, financial conditions, it is advisable to detail the presented problems with the help of specific statistical indicators that speak about the expenditure on food products in the overall structure of household consumption. It is obvious that with an increase in the share of expenditures on food products, the household is faced with a complication in economic accessibility to the organization of good nutrition.

On a global scale, it is, of course, natural that the poorer the country, the more of their income members of society spend on food, and the more confidently we can talk about the actual problems of food poverty. In rich countries, the opposite trend is observed. Eloquent statistics are offered by Eurostat. Thus, in 2019, households in the EU spent more than 956 billion euros (equivalent to 6.8% of the GDP of the European Union) on food and non-alcoholic beverages. This represents 13.0% of total consumer spending. Households in Romania spent about a quarter of total consumer spending on food and non-alcoholic beverages (26.0%); in Lithuania 20.2% and Estonia 19.3%. In contrast, the share of spending on food and non-alcoholic beverages was less than 10% in three countries of the European Union: Ireland (8.6%), Luxembourg (8.9%) and Austria (9.7%) (Eurostat. Your key to European statistics 2020). The situation is also heterogeneous within individual countries. For example, in the UK, households with the lowest incomes spent a larger share of their budget on food and drink in 2021, around twice as much as the tenth of households with the highest incomes (20.4% versus 11.1%) (Karjalainen & Levell 2021).

In 2021, according to a sample survey of household living conditions, which is conducted on an ongoing basis by the Main Department of Statistics in the Dnipropetrovsk region, the total consumer spending on food and non-alcoholic beverages in the region was 40.3% (The Main Department of Statistics in the Dnipropetrovsk region 2022) and in Ukraine as a whole, 46.4% (State Statistics Service of Ukraine 2022). This indicator designates the economic accessibility of food products; its limiting criterion is 60.0% (Methodology for determining the main indicators of food security, approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine “Some issues of food security” 2007). However, as we can see, in reality this indicator exceeds the corresponding one in EU countries by

1.5 to 4 times. In our opinion, this shows some difficulties with the organization of a full-fledged diet. At the same time, it should be noted that in Ukraine there has been a positive trend in the decrease in the share of household consumer spending on food products and non-alcoholic beverages from 64.2% in 1999 to 46.4% in the fourth quarter of 2021 (State Statistics Service of Ukraine 2022).

DETAILING THE PROBLEMS OF FOOD SECURITY AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

Against the background of the presented data, based on the well-known expression, “think globally – act locally”, it is interesting to turn to some indicators of food security at the level of a particular city. Today, 2/3 of the total population of Ukraine lives in the cities. These indicators are directly related to the socio-economic situation in the past and at the present stage.

Specifically, in the winter of 2021 the author of this article conducted a survey, “Features of the gastronomic culture of modern Ukrainian society (on the example of the great city – the Dnipro)”. One of the questionnaire indicators was: “What dishes, drinks and desserts, in your opinion, belong to the national Ukrainian cuisine?” We obtained quite interesting results. Thus, 70.2% of respondents named borsch in their answers; 38.9% – lard; 23.5% – vareniki or stuffed boiled dough; 10.1% – dumplings or boiled dough; 8.0% – bread; 7.7% – pies; 4.2% – stewed fruit; 3.6% – donuts; 3.5% – fresh soup; 3.4% – kutia; 2.8% of respondents gave other answers; 2.7% – not interested; 3.0% – didn’t answer (Table 1).

Table 1. “What dishes, drinks and deserts, in your opinion, belong to the national Ukrainian cuisine?” (name no more than two dishes).

No.	The name of the dish, drinks and desserts	%
1.	Borsch	70.2
2.	Lard	38.9
3.	Vareniki or stuffed boiled dough	23.5
4.	Dumplings or boiled dough	10.1
5.	Bread	8.0
6.	Pies	7.7
7.	Stewed fruit	4.2
8.	Donuts	3.6
9.	Fresh soup	3.5

10.	Kutia	3.4
11.	Other	2.8
12.	Not interested	2.7
13.	Didn't answer	3.0

It should be noted that almost no one named desserts, fish and meat dishes, which, in our opinion, is an indicator of the poor quality of life in the past [Table 1]. In general, the above answers may indicate that respondents lack information about Ukrainian gastronomic culture i.e., in their minds it has acquired stereotypical clichés. Such dishes, rather, find their place in culinary practices due to the great inertia of any culture, in contrast to the desired gastronomic education, which would give additional impulses to the revival of Ukrainian gastronomic culture and civic identity.

In general, socio-economic barriers and financial difficulties, primarily in the form of low solvency of the population, still stand in the way of solving the problems of food security and the full development of the gastronomic culture of Ukrainian society. This is evidenced by the respondents' answers to the following question in our study (Table 2):

Table 2. "Are you able to buy the most necessary products?"

No.		%
1.	Not enough money	20.6
2.	It's hard to tell if it's enough or not	22.3
3.	Enough	55.1
4.	Not interested	1.2
5.	Didn't answer	0.8

As you can see, in 2021 almost every fifth respondent says that he or she does not have enough money for the most necessary food products. Mostly they are representatives of the elderly. The data for this indicator is almost identical to similar research that we conducted nine months ago. These results are also confirmed by a larger study. In accordance with the sociological monitoring of

the Ukrainian society, conducted by the specialists of the Institute of Sociology (National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine), in 2020 about a third (27.7%) of the respondents answered that they do not have the opportunity to buy the most necessary products. However, compared to 1998, this figure has significantly decreased (Table 3) (Parashchevin 2020: 493).

Table 3. “Are you able to buy the most necessary products?”

	1998	2002	2006	2010	2014	2018	2020
Not enough money	60.6	49.6	35.7	32.4	26.6	25.1	27.7
It’s hard to tell if it’s enough or not	18.2	17.5	19.4	17.8	21.4	19.0	24.1
Enough	19.4	29.6	42.3	47.3	50.0	53.2	44.1
Not interested	1.0	2.7	2.0	2.3	1.8	2.7	3.7
Didn’t answer	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.4

Obviously, a more systematic study, using sociological methods, of the nutritional conditions of various social groups, both at the national and regional levels, can contribute not only to an adequate assessment of their quality of life, but also to the process of developing a program for effectively overcoming relevant problems at the state level.

In this regard, in our analysis we tried to identify the difference between the desired foods and those that the respondents consume on a daily basis. Thus, the main food commodity that people usually prefer is meat; 60.2% would like to see it on their own table every day. Vegetables in this list were given 50.6% of respondents’ answers; fish – 48.7%; fruits – 41.7%. Less necessary, according to respondents, are confectionery – 23.7%; cereals – 22.3%; and seafood – 20.7%. If we compare the food products that the respondents would like to consume and those that the respondents consume daily, we will get the following results. The data differ significantly between the desire to consume fruits (41.7%) and the daily availability of such an opportunity (30.0%). The same unfavorable situation is with fish and seafood: the difference between desire and opportunity is more than fifteen percentage points, respectively fish 48.7% and 30.1%, and

seafood 20.7% and 5.5%. Only 22.3% noted that they would give preference to cereals in the process of everyday nutrition, but actually 41.9% of the total number of respondents consume them almost daily. In addition, 74.6% include bread in their diet every day; 50.2% – soups (Tables 4, 5). In the process of selecting food products, respondents most often pay attention to health benefits (59.0%), taste (57.6%); a large number of respondents also pay attention to the price (37.3%). At the same time, 9.5% are interested in the prestige of the food they buy, in other words, that the product be fashionable, popular, branded, or expensive (Table 6). Thus, during their respective purchases the respondents take into account the benefit for their own health, which indicates the importance for consumers of issues related to the quality of food products. Therefore, including on this basis, it is also absolutely correct to assess this criterion as one of the important ones in the framework of the formation of an effective food security policy.

Table 4. “What food products would you like to consume daily?” (choose up to five options).

No.	Name of food products	%
1.	Meat	60.2
2.	Vegetables	50.6
3.	Fish	48.7
4.	Fruit	41.7
5.	Dairy products	31.8
6.	Eggs	28.0
7.	Confectionery	23.7
8.	Cereals	22.3
9.	Seafood	20.7
10.	Bread	15.1
11.	Soups	12.8
12.	Not interested	2.9
13.	Didn't answer	0.5

Table 5. “What food products do you have the opportunity to consume daily?” (choose up to five options).

No.	Name of food products	%
1.	Meat	54.2
2.	Vegetables	47.2

3.	Fish	30.1
4.	Fruit	30.0
5.	Dairy products	25.1
6.	Eggs	24.7
7.	Confectionery	25.8
8.	Cereals	41.9
9.	Seafood	5.5
10.	Bread	74.6
11.	Soups	50.2
12.	Not interested	3.3
13.	Didn't answer	0.4

*Table 6. "What is the first thing you pay attention to when choosing food?"
(choose up to two options).*

No.		%
1.	Benefits for health	59.0
2.	Taste qualities	57.6
3.	Price	37.3
4.	Product prestige	9.5
5.	Not interested	2.9
6.	Didn't answer	0.7

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER DISCUSSION

Notwithstanding some specifics, it should be agreed that the share of consumer spending on food products in the household budget is one of the eloquent indicators of both food security and the quality of life of society. About half of consumer spending on food products by households in Ukraine – compared with the countries of the European Union, where they spend from a quarter to one tenth – speaks of some problems with economic access to food. Obviously, in Ukrainian society, people spend a lot on food and non-alcoholic beverages in the overall structure of their consumer spending, not because they eat a lot, but because they have relatively low incomes. Specifically, in 2021, based on the annual representative sociological research “Ukrainian Society: Monitoring

Social Changes” of the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, about a quarter of respondents noted a lack of money to purchase the most necessary food products. The data obtained also correlate with the data from the author’s sociological study, “Features of the gastronomic culture of modern Ukrainian society (on the example of the great city – the Dnipro. December 2021)”. At the same time, for the residents of Dnipro, there is some difference between the desire and the ability to consume such high-calorie and health-important foods as fruits, fish and seafood daily.

Further research should be devoted to finding an effective solution to the identified problems, which are exacerbated during wartime, with the help of organizing an appropriate policy based on detailed sociological monitoring of the population’s processes of nutrition, improving the efficiency of food banks and relevant social programs, as well as solving the problems of internally displaced persons, the population’s labor poverty and other needy social groups. Regardless of certain obstacles that are present and have their own specifics in almost every country, positive trends have been recorded in Ukraine regarding a decrease in the share of household spending on food from 64.2% in 1999 to 46.4% in 2021, and also a decrease in the number of respondents who experience serious financial difficulties in purchasing the most necessary food products from 60.6% in 1998 to 27.7% in 2020.

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