

# COMMUNITY FOOD ENVIRONMENT MAPPING TOOLS: FOOD OUTLET CENSUS

The Food Environment Toolbox: Tools to Measure Natural & Built Food Environments in LMICs

**Overview of Food Outlet Census.** The Food Outlet Census is designed to assess all of the food outlets in the built environment in a given community. It is one of three community food environment mapping tools included in the Food Environment Toolbox that can be used either in combination or standalone. After identifying the boundaries of a given community that will be included in the mapping exercise, enumerators will visit each food outlet and record GPS coordinates, the types of foods sold, the overarching quality of foods sold, and document the food and beverage promotion at the outlet. The food outlet census tool is informed by the USAID Advancing Nutrition Market Mapping tool, the Environmental Profile of a Community's Health (EPOCH), and the Multisectoral Food and Nutrition Security Project (MUSEFO) surveys (Chow et al., 2010; USAID AN, 2023; GIZ, 2020). This tool describes the types of food outlets in the community, the availability and quality of food sold, and its promotion.



**What is the overarching purpose of this tool?** To assess the types of food outlets that consumers have access to, and the availability and quality of food sold and promoted within them.

**When should I use this tool?** You should use this tool if you want to document the types of food outlets that are available in the community and information about the foods that they sell and promote.

**What is the sampling approach used?** A census of all food outlets within the community boundaries decided upon by the research team is included in the sample. This could include an entire village, a radius around schools, or another boundary defined by the research team.

**Which food environment domains and types does this tool apply to?** The food outlet census captures the external food environment as well as capturing information about the built food environment.

**Which dimensions of the food environment does this tool assess?** The food outlet census assesses the food environment dimensions of food availability, promotion, and quality.

Tool	Food environment type		Food environment dimension	
	Built	Availability	Quality	Promotion
Community FE Mapping tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Food outlets in community</b></li> <li>• Mobile vendors in community</li> <li>• Roadside promotions in community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GPS coordinates of food outlets/vendors</li> <li>• Level of permanence of food outlets/vendors</li> </ul>	Observation of how much of food sold is damaged, spoiled, or has insects on them	Food & beverage promotions at outlet and on roadside <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food group</li> <li>• Type of promotion</li> <li>• Location of promotion</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food groups sold at mobile vendor</li> <li>• Form sold (e.g., raw/fresh, deep fried, etc.)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visibility of promotion</li> <li>• Targeting children?</li> <li>• Total number</li> </ul>
--	--	--	--	--

**Who administers the tool and to whom?** An enumerator completes the observational checklist at each of the food outlets, preferably using an electronic tablet.

**What are the methods this tool employs?**

- 1) GPS coordinates for each outlet
- 2) Observational checklist for each outlet

**How are the data obtained from this tool analyzed?** The data obtained can be spatially analyzed based on vendor types and food sold and promoted. Indicators related to the proportion of “healthy” and “unhealthy” food groups can also be calculated.

**What are the strengths of this tool?** The tool is easy to use, it allows for real-time data checks if using an electronic tablet to collect data, provides an overview of the retail environment in a given community.

**What are the weaknesses of this tool?** The tool can be difficult to identify the boundaries of the community to include in the sampling, enumerators may have some difficulties with classifying foods according to food groups, and questions related to quality are somewhat subjective.

Citations:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2011) Division of Nutrition Physical Activity and Obesity, Department of Health and Human Services. Children’s Food Environment State Indicator Report. <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/childrensfoodenvironment.pdf>

Chow, C.K. et al. 2010. Environmental Profile of a Community's Health (EPOCH): an instrument to measure environmental determinants of cardiovascular health in five countries. *PLoS one*, 5(12), p.e14294.

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). 2020. The Multisectoral Food and Nutrition Security (MUSEFO) project Cambodia.

USAID Advancing Nutrition. 2023. *Guidelines for Market-Based Food Environment Assessments. Instruction Manual*. Arlington, VA: USAID Advancing Nutrition.