

## EXPLORING DIETARY SHIFTS AND NUTRITIONAL PATTERNS ECONOMIC TURMOIL: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF FOOD CONSUMPTION IN SRI LANKA

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### Abstract

The COVID pandemic and subsequent economic crisis have increased food prices extensively in Sri Lanka and hence has been noted as a country with one of the highest food inflations in the world. This has dire effects on the food intake and therefore, the required nutrient intake in the Sri Lankan households. This research investigates the magnitude of this effect in cross sections of the Sri Lankan populace disaggregating into rural, urban and estates and by income categories. The study was focused on to determine the responsiveness of household demand for twelve major food commodities consumed by typical Sri Lankan households and analyzing the effects of changes in price using the quadratic approximation of the Almost Ideal Demand System (AIDS) estimated using the state-of-the-art QUAIDS model. The data used are from the household income and expenditure survey conducted in 2019/2020. Results revealed that food consumption patterns in Sri Lanka are influenced by income, price, socio-economic status, and geographic factors. Research found that, except few, the majority of the most consumed food items are price and expenditure inelastic. Through running simulations, the study shows that households experienced a reduction in nutrient intake in carbohydrates, fats, and proteins and the most vulnerable and affected are low income, estate sector households. The study emphasizes the significance of formulating food policies tailored to the specific food demand patterns of separate groups, and stresses the noticeable impact of projected global food price increases on the food and nutrition security of Sri Lankan households, highlighting the necessity of targeted measures to ensure sufficient nutrition for everyone.

**Keywords:** Economic crisis, Elasticities, Food demand, Nutrient intake

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