

## ORIGINAL RESEARCH

# Determinants of Food access and Diet quality of Women of Reproductive age from fish farming households in Western Kenya

*Maureen Jepkorir Cheserek<sup>1</sup>, Erick Ochieng Ogello<sup>2</sup>, Kevin Odhiambo Obiero<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Department of Human Nutrition, Faculty of Health Sciences, Egerton University, Kenya

<sup>2</sup>Department of Fisheries and Natural Resources, Maseno University, Kenya

<sup>3</sup>Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI), Kenya

<sup>1</sup>Correspondence Author Email: [mcheserek@egerton.ac.ke](mailto:mcheserek@egerton.ac.ke)

### Abstract

This study investigated factors affecting household food access and diet quality of women of reproductive age within fish farming households in Western Kenya during COVID-19 pandemic period. A cross-sectional study was conducted among 138 women with children aged 6-59 months from registered vulnerable and marginalized farmer groups in rural communities of Kakamega, Siaya and Busia counties. Almost half (47.1%) of the fish farming households experienced severe food insecurity with only 1.4% being food secure. Female headed households (AOR=0.082; 95% CI, 0.094-0.802; P<0.05) and unmarried women farmers (AOR=5.616, 95% CI, 1.257-2.429, P<0.05) were more likely to be food insecure. Overall, 47.1% of fish farming households experienced severe food insecurity with only 1.4% being food secure. Female-headed households and unmarried women farmers were more likely to be food insecure. Further, only a third of women (30%) met minimum dietary diversity, with those from female-headed households (AOR=0.046, 95% CI, 0.004-0.497, P<0.05) consuming a less diverse diet, and those from households where food availability was affected by COVID-19 pandemic (AOR=2.331, 95% CI, 1.024-5.305, P<0.05). However, women who were aware of dietary diversity and included value-added fish products in their meals consumed a diverse diet. In conclusion, women consumed poor quality diets due to the negative effects of COVID-19 pandemic on household food access and lack of awareness on dietary diversity. There is a need to improve food access among fish farming communities and enhance diet quality through nutrition education and social behaviour change communication. Food access and diet quality of women from fish farming households

**Key terms:** Diet quality; Fish Farming Households; Food Access: Women of reproductive age