



NATIONAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS



# COST OF A HEALTHY DIET

(MARCH 2026)



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# INTRODUCTION

## HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ The Cost of a Healthy Diet (CoHD) is the least expensive combination of locally available items that meets globally consistent food-based dietary guidelines. It is used as a measure of physical and economic access to healthy diets. This is a lower bound (or floor) of the cost per adult per day excluding the cost of transportation and meal preparation.
- ◆ The national average Cost of a Healthy Diet was N1,541 in March 2026. This shows an increase of 1.89% when compared to the amount recorded in previous month (February 2026 was N1,513).
- ◆ In March 2026, the average CoHD was highest in the South-east at N1,899 per adult per day, compared to N1,233 per adult per day in North-east.
- ◆ The CoHD has risen faster than general inflation and food inflation. However, the CoHD and the food CPI are not directly comparable; the CoHD includes fewer items and is measured in Naira per day, while the food CPI is a weighted index.

### Note:

*kulikuli (Groundnut Cake), Akara (Beans Cake), and Locust Beans (Dawadawa, Iru) have been excluded from the list of possible least-cost items in Cost of a Healthy Diet (CoHD) baskets, though they were sometimes selected in 2025. Kulikuli (Groundnut Cake) and Akara (Beans Cake) were removed because they are mixed items containing significant amounts of more than one food group (Pulses, Oil), while Locust Beans (Dawadawa, Iru) were excluded as they are typically used as a condiment and consumed in small amounts.*

Food environments determine a household's physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food for an active and healthy life. A suite of indicators known as the Cost and Affordability of a Healthy Diet (CoAHD) have been developed to improve the measurement of food access and are now monitored globally by the United Nations and the World Bank as a metric of food security. The Cost of a Healthy Diet (CoHD) metric uses the availability, price, and nutritional composition of retail food items to identify the **least expensive** combination of items that meet requirements for a healthy diet.

To compute the Cost of a Healthy Diet indicator, the following data are required: (a) retail food prices, (b) food composition data, and (c) a healthy diet standard.

### Retail Food Prices

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) gathers retail food price data every month from 10,534 sources in both urban and rural areas across all Nigerian states. This data helps the NBS track inflation and includes prices for over 300 food items. These items are commonly part of a healthy diet, and their price data is used to calculate the Cost of a Healthy Diet (CoHD).

### Healthy Diet Standard

In Nigeria, CoHD is the minimum cost of foods needed to meet international recommendations defined in the Healthy Diet Basket (HDB), a globally relevant set of criteria that captures similarities across most national Food-Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDG) (Table 1). The HDB was created as a comparable standard to calculate and compare the cost and affordability of healthy diets across countries; the HDB is most relevant for countries where there is not yet a quantified national FBDG, like Nigeria.

**Table 1. Description of the Healthy Diet Basket (HDB)**

Food Group	Number of food items selected	Energy content (kilocalories)	Share of total calories (%)	Typical weights of example foods (g)
Starchy Staples	2	1,160	50	322 g dry rice
Oils and Fats	1	300	13	34 g oil
Fruits	2	160	7	230-300 g
Vegetables	3	110	5	270-400 g
Legumes Nuts and Seeds	1	300	13	85 g dry bean
Animal Source Foods	2	300	13	210 g egg
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2,330</b>	<b>100</b>	

## Average Cost of a Healthy Diet (National, State & Zonal Levels)

The national average Cost of a Healthy Diet was N1,541 per adult per day in March 2026. At the State level Ekiti, Imo and Abia States recorded the highest cost at N2,091, N2,052, and N1,970 respectively. Adamawa, Federal Capital Territory and Taraba State accounted for the lowest costs at N1,004, N1,113 and N1,149 respectively.

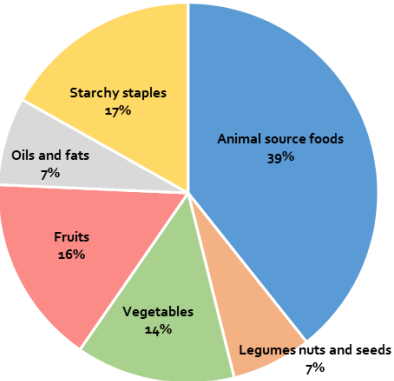
At the Zonal level, the average CoHD was highest in the South-East Zone at N1,899 per day, followed by South-West Zone at N1,801 per day. The lowest average Cost of a Healthy diet was recorded in North-east Zone at N1,233 per day.

(Please see Appendix for full graphic representation)

## Cost Share by Food Group

Animal Source Foods were the most expensive food group recommendations to meet in March, accounting for 39% of the total CoHD to provide 13% of the total calories. Fruits and vegetables were the most expensive food groups in terms of price per calorie; they accounted for 16% and 14% respectively, of total CoHD while providing only 7% and 5% of total calories in the Healthy Diet Basket. Legumes, Nuts, and Seeds were the least-expensive food group on average, at 7% of the total cost.

Figure 1 - Cost Share by Food Group



## Trends in the Cost of a Healthy Diet

The Cost of a Healthy Diet (CoHD) has been rising steadily over the past year. As of March 2026, the CoHD was 4.38% higher than in March 2025, increasing from N1,477 to N1,541. While the price of Starchy staples and Vegetables decreased, all other food groups experienced price increases. On a month-on-month basis, the cost increased by 1.89% compared to February 2026 (N1,513). The increase was driven by the rise in prices across all food groups.

Table 2. Changes in the Cost of a Healthy Diet Over Time

Food Group	Percent Change in CoHD	
	Month-on-Month	Year-on-Year
Starchy Staples	4.33%	-28.76%
Oils and Fats	0.81%	23.51%
Fruits	0.91%	2.89%
Vegetables	0.96%	-7.60%
Legumes Nuts and Seeds	2.65%	3.50%
Animal Source Foods	1.68%	34.15%

## General and Food Inflation Relative to the Cost of a Healthy Diet

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measure of inflation, the average change over time in the prices of goods and services consumed by people for day-to-day living, while the food index is a subset of the CPI which reflects changes in prices that households pay for food. CPI records the development of market prices of agricultural commodities and foodstuffs. Figure 4a compares the general CPI and the food CPI with the nominal Naira value of the Cost of a Healthy Diet, to understand whether the least-cost items needed for a healthy diet are rising in cost at a rate like that of the rest of the goods and services in Nigeria. Food prices and the Cost of a Healthy Diet are both expected to rise over time; here we focus on the relative rate of that inflation.

The food CPI includes a larger number of items, and more packaged and value-added items than the Cost of a Healthy Diet, as least-cost items are often unprocessed.

## Least-Cost Diets and Frequently Selected Least-Cost Items

Table 2, *(Please see Appendix)* showcases the most and least expensive places to buy a healthy diet in March 2026. Ekiti (Urban) topped the chart with the highest Cost of a Healthy Diet (CoHD) at N2,288 per adult per day. Conversely, Adamawa (Rural) offered the most affordable option at N979 for CoHD. Interestingly, some of the least-cost food items remained consistent across both locations. These items include Maize (White) Grains, Bean White and, Shrimps White Dried. However, price variations between these locations resulted in different costs per item. Also, some unique least-cost options emerged. For instance, in Ekiti (Urban), Millet Whole Grain was the most affordable in the Starchy Staple food group, whereas in Adamawa (Rural) it was Garri White. In terms of the Fats and Oils Food group, Ekiti (Urban) recorded Palm oil as the most affordable, while Adamawa (Rural) went for Vegetable oil.

Table 3, *(Please see Appendix)* shows frequently selected least-cost items in each food group across all state-sector combinations. This table demonstrates that some items are commonly the least costly across different locations. For example, in Legumes Nuts and Seeds Food group, Beans White was the least expensive item in 55% of state-sectors, and Palm oil was the least-expensive item in the Oil and Fats Food group in 55% of all the state-sectors. Garri White and Maize Grains white were both selected as the least expensive items in the Starchy Staple food group, each accounting for 30%.

Finally, Table 4 *(Please see Appendix)* offers a granular look at the most budget-friendly food choices consistently found across different Nigerian states, carefully chosen to represent each of the country's geopolitical zones. The analysis within this table illustrates that certain food items repeatedly stand out as the least expensive options, regardless of their geographical location. For example, aside from Bauchi (North East) and Rivers (South-South), Garri White has consistently been the least expensive option in Starchy Staple food group across various states. When it comes to Fruits, Lagos (South-West), Rivers (South-South), Bauchi (North-East), Kano (North-West), and the Federal Capital Territory (North-Central) chose Avocado pears, while Anambra (South-East) opted for fresh oranges.

# POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Cost of a Healthy Diet provides important information about food access, a key aspect of food security, which is useful for government, civil society and development partners, private sector, and researchers.

For instance, where the Cost of a Healthy Diet is high, it is possible to identify which least-cost items and food groups are driving the high cost. Stakeholders can identify supply challenges in specific foods or food groups to be addressed, for example with improved production, distribution, or market access.

The Cost of a Healthy Diet can also inform:

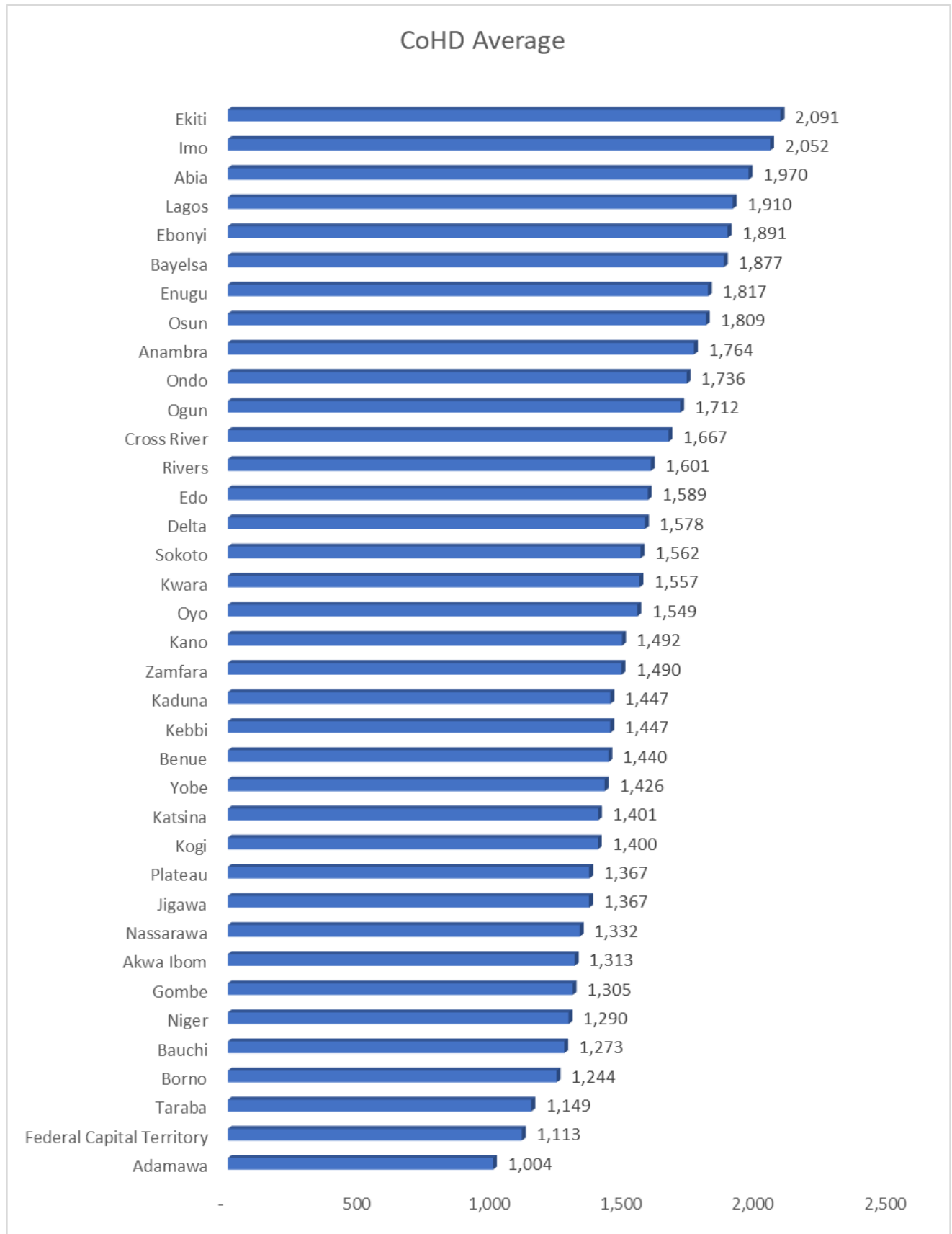
- ◆ The minimum income needed by households to access a healthy diet, and social protection and transfer amounts for vulnerable populations.
- ◆ Prioritization of commodities for agricultural production and trade policy interventions.
- ◆ Targeting interventions, including nutrition education, to populations with the most potential to benefit; nutrition education is only effective when people can afford to comply with the recommendations.
- ◆ Research on the relationship between food access and other food system factors and outcomes.

These results can also foster collaboration among a wide range of stakeholders, such as policymakers, researchers and civil society actors that focus on food security, to devise strategies that tackle access, availability, and affordability of healthy diet effectively. Future research incorporating income can also be used to determine the proportion and number of the population that are unable to afford a healthy diet.

*This bulletin was produced by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Nigeria in collaboration with Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) and technically supported by the Food Prices for Nutrition project, led by the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University, in partnership with International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the World Bank. This bulletin aims to inform decision-makers from government agencies, UN agencies and NGOs to improve access to healthy diets. The bulletin is available online at <https://microdata.nigerianstat.gov.ng/index.php/catalog/146>. Answers to frequently asked questions about the Cost of a Healthy Diet are also available online <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/>*

# APPENDIX

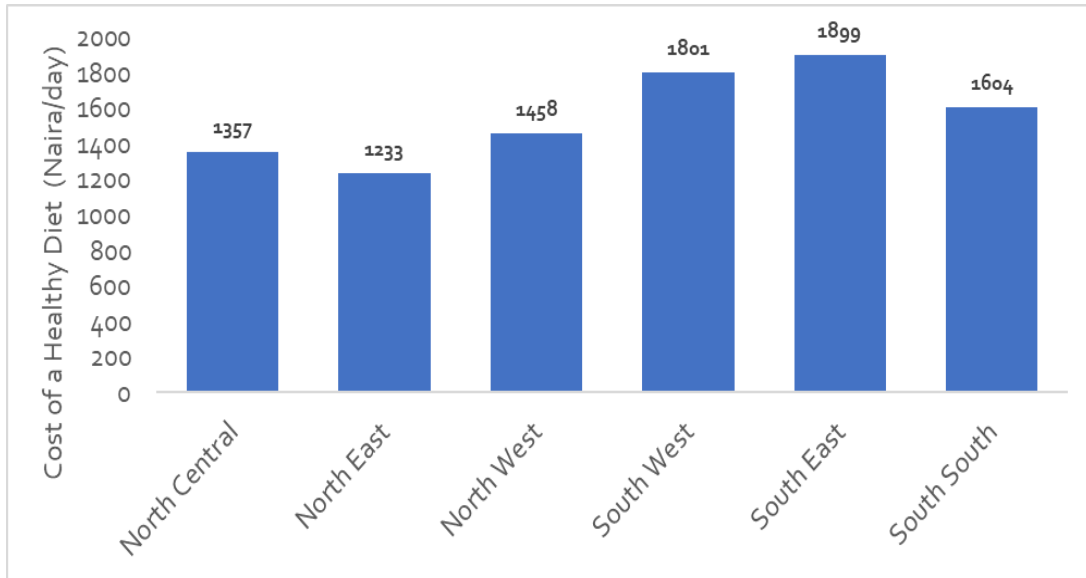
Figure 2. Average Cost of a Healthy Diet by State



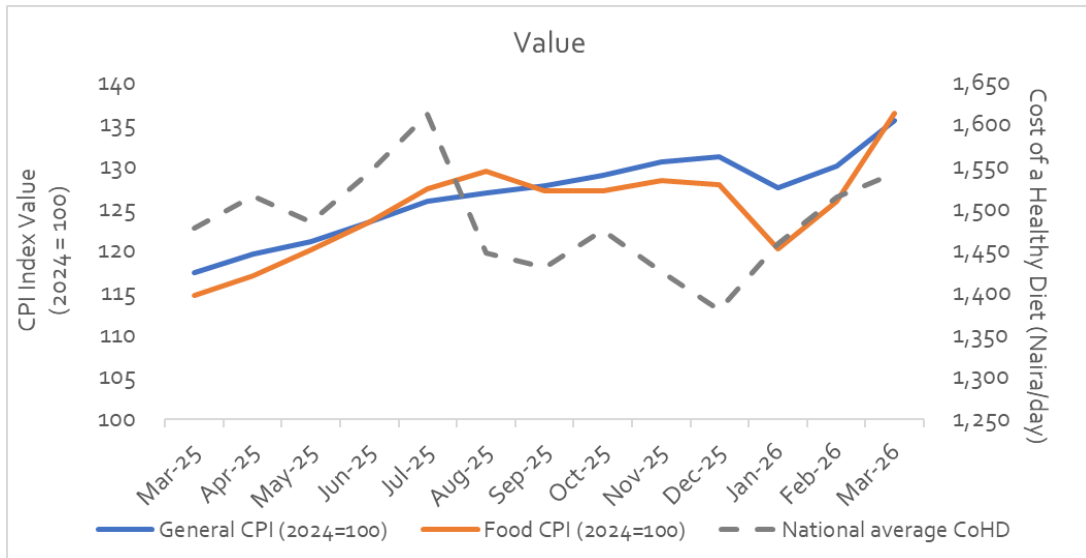


# APPENDIX

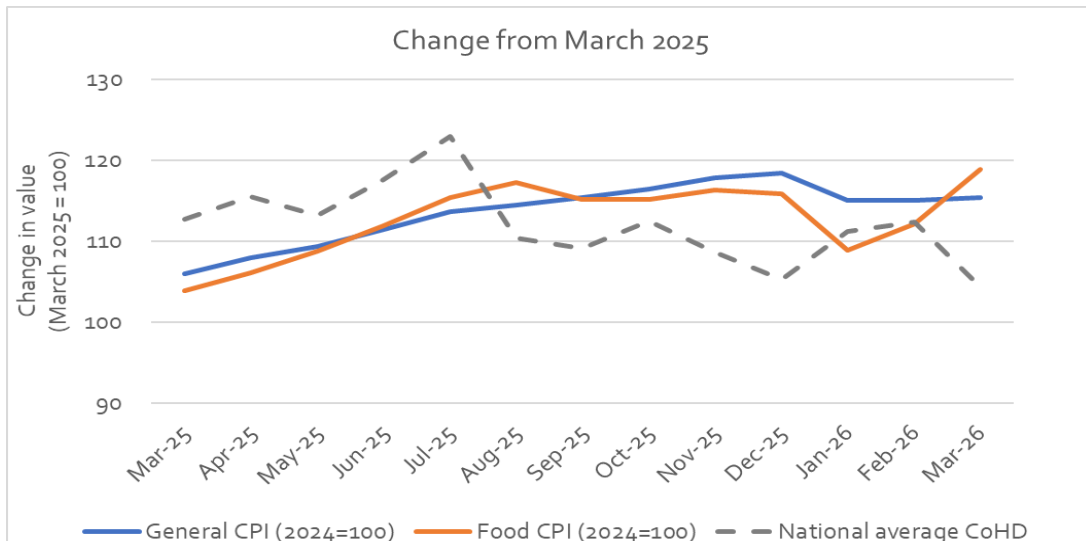
**Figure 3. Zonal Average CoHD**



**Figure 4a. National average CoHD (Naira/day) and Consumer Price Indexes (2024=100)**



**Figure 4b. National average CoHD and Consumer Price Indexes (2024 = 100)**





# APPENDIX

**Table 3. States with Least and Most expensive cost of items**

Mar-2026	Most expensive:		Least expensive:	
	Ekiti (Urban)		Adamawa (Rural)	
	Least-cost item	Cost	Least-cost item	Cost
Starchy Staples	Maize (white) Grains	137	Maize (white) Grains	91
	Millet Whole Grain	143	Maize (white) Grains	64
Oils and Fats	Palm Oil, 75cl	131	Vegetable Oil, 75cl	82
Fruits	Oranges, fresh	248	Dates Palm fruits/Debunu	115
	Tangerine	118	Pears/Ube	124
Vegetables	Carrots, Fresh	264	Baobab Leaves Powder (Kuka)	17
	Geen Leaf/tete	223	Okra (Dried)	39
	Onion, fresh	136	Tomatoes (Dried)	36
Legumes Nuts & Seeds	Beans White	135	Beans White	73
Animal Source Foods	Agric hen eggs, (a Crate of 30 pieces)	368	Fresh Milk/Nono, 75cl	225
	Shrimps white dried	383	Shrimps white dried	116
<b>Total (CoHD)</b>		<b>2,288</b>		<b>979</b>

**Table 4. Top Three (3) most frequently selected least-cost items by Food Group**

Food Group	Item Name	Selected as least-cost % of possible selection
Starchy Staples	Garri White	30%
	Maize Grains White	30%
	Garri (Yellow)	11%
Oils and Fats	Palm oil, 75cl	55%
	Vegetable Oil, 75cl	23%
	Soya Bean Oil, 75cl	8%
Fruits	Avocado Pear	34%
	Dates Palm fruits (Debinu)	26%
	Desert Date Fruit (Aduwa)	15%
Vegetables	Tomatoes (Dried)	25%
	Okra (Dried)	23%
	Oha leaves	15%
Legumes Nuts and Seeds	Beans White	55%
	Soya Beans	14%
	Beans Brown	9%
Animal Source Foods	Cray Fish (Small, dried)	24%
	Fresh Milk/Nono, 75cl	16%
	Agric hen eggs, (a Crate of 30 pieces)	14%

# APPENDIX

**Table 5: Top most frequently selected least-cost items by food group in some State**

Food Group	Item Name		
	Lagos	Rivers	Anambra
Starchy Staples	Garri White	Garri Yellow	Garri White
	Maize (White) Grains	Maize (White) Grains	Maize (White) Grains
Oils and Fats	Palm oil, 75cl	Palm oil, 75cl	Palm oil, 75cl
Fruits	Avocado Pear	Avocado Pear	Oranges, fresh
	Dates Palm fruits (Debinu)	Dates Palm fruits (Debinu)	Pears/Ube
Vegetables	Green Leaf/tete	Baobab Leaves Powder /Kuka	Oha leaves
	Oha leaves	Oha leaves	Onions, fresh
Legumes Nuts and Seeds	Beans Brown	Cow Peas (Brown)	Beans White
	Soya Beans		Cow Peas (brown)
Animal Source Foods	Agric hen eggs (a Crate of 30 pieces)	Cray fish small white	Cray fish small white
	Cray fish small white	Powdered Milk Three Crown,350g	Liquid Yoghurt, 1 Liter
Food Group	Item Name		
	Federal Capital Territory	Bauchi	Kano
Starchy Staples	Garri (white)	Garr Yellow	Garri (white)
	Maize Flour White, sold loose	Maize (White) Grains	Maize (White) Grains
Oils and Fats	Soy bean oil, 75cl	Vegetable Oil, 75cl	Soya bean oil, 75cl
	Vegetable Oil, 75cl		
Fruits	Avocado Pear	Avocado Pear	Avocado Pear
	Desert Date Fruit/Aduwa	Dates Palm fruits (Debinu)	Desert Date Fruit/Aduwa
Vegetables	Kuka (Dried)	Baobab Leaves Powder (Kuka)	Baobab Leaves Powder (Kuka)
	Oha leaves	Okra, Dried	Okra (Dried)
Legumes Nuts and Seeds	Beans (white)	Beans (white)	Beans (white)
Animal Source Foods	Cray fish small white	Chicken Wings	Agric hen eggs, (a Crate of 30 pieces)
	Fresh Milk /Nono, 75cl	Fresh Milk /Nono, 75cl	Fresh Milk /Nono, 75cl

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