



## Policy Brief: Enhancing food safety in Kebbi State

### Executive Summary:

There have been recent incidents of foodborne illnesses such as Cholera highlight across Nigeria. These incidents highlight the important role of food safety which affects the well-



being of citizens. There is an urgent need for robust and proactive measures to ensure the safety of our food supply. This policy brief outlines key research findings and policy recommendations to enhance food safety through improved regulation, inspection, education, and technological innovation in Kebbi State. It draws on two related studies on food safety conducted by the Bill and Melinda Gates-funded project RSM2SNF (Research

supporting African MSMEs to deliver affordable, safe, and nutritious foods). Between July 2023 and February 2024, key information about the size, infrastructure, and governance of fish, tomatoes, and green leafy vegetable (GLV) wholesale markets were collected in 8 Nigerian states, including Kebbi State where 22 wholesale markets were identified for fish. Table 1 describes the findings related to infrastructure and food safety in the markets in the study states.

State	Has a functional toilet (%)	No. of Traders per toilet	Access to pipe-borne water (%)	Treat water (%)	Main water source is a bore hole	Main water source is a well	Main water source (streams, jerricans, etc.)
Cross River	32	911	0	0	36	2	62
Kaduna	39	510	5	9	29	46	19
Ebonyi	26	722	13	0	57	8	30
Oyo	52	470	4	17	72	20	9
FCT	100	216	40	20	60	0	20
Plateau	17	1129	8	0	19	21	55
Borno	95	183	0	0	24	0	76
<b>Kebbi</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>28</b>

Source: RSM2SNF wholesale market study

## Key findings:

- **Inadequate toilets and clean water:**
  - While 77 % of wholesale markets for fish in Kebbi State had a functional toilet the trader/toilet ratio was found to be over 200 traders to a toilet, on average. As a result of insufficient functional toilets, people can resort to open defecation, or the use of buckets sometimes kept around their stalls in the market. These practices can lead to the contamination of food (sold in the market) as well as soil and water sources with fecal matter, which can harbor the *Vibrio cholerae* bacteria.
  - No wholesale markets in Kebbi State have pipe-borne water. The major sources of water are boreholes & wells; 32% and 41% respectively. Another important source of water in Kebbi is water supplied to markets in jerricans (28%) and no market treat their water.
  - Trader hygiene practices (washing hands after toilet use) and handling practices (washing vegetables with clean water that is changed frequently) are important for reducing consumer exposure to microbial contaminants such as *E.coli* ((Martins et al., 2024). Without enough functional toilets and handwashing stations, many people will not wash their hands properly after defecation, increasing the spread of cholera bacteria through direct contact, food handling, and other means.
- **Lack of Public Awareness and Education:**
  - No markets in Kebbi State have (1) any posters promoting food safety practices, (2) any rules about food safety communicated to traders or (3) quality control checks for these perishable foods respectively. This shows that food safety and food safety regulations are not yet prioritized in these food markets.
  - In the study on vegetable traders in southwest Nigeria, less than 1% of traders had ever received training on food safety and only about half of them changed their wash water (for vegetable washing) correctly (Martins et al., 2024). This means there is significant scope to improve trader hygiene and food safety handling practices via training.

### Key Messages



Kebbi State needs more functional toilets in food markets



Food markets in Kebbi State need access to potable water



Food traders and consumers need adequate food safety training

## Improper Waste Disposal:

- The main way waste is disposed of in Kebbi state is either with individual traders dropping their waste in a central location from which that waste is picked up daily, weekly, or less frequently or having their waste picked up from their stalls. Having solid waste around markets that is not properly disposed of frequently is a potential source of pathogens such as *Salmonella spp.*, *Escherichia coli*, and *Vibrio cholerae* that cause diseases.



Source: *RSM2SNF wholesale market study*

## Policy Recommendations:

1. **Invest in the construction of more modern toilets** to reduce the trader-to-toilet ratios in the state.
2. Launch statewide **education and training for traders and consumers** to educate the public on safe food handling, storage, and preparation practices. This has been found to encourage adoption of good practices, particularly when the cost of adoption is low (Seaman and Eves 2010; WHO, 2015)
3. Treat water from boreholes or well within the food markets (e.g. by chlorination) to prevent potential health hazards
4. Integrate food safety education into school curricula to raise awareness among children and their families to improve food **safety demand and supply**



5. Employ more workers as Environmental Health Officers and train them on the Principles of Food Safety, Food Hygiene, and Personal Hygiene.
6. **Monitoring and control of hygiene in the markets:** The Environmental Health Officers should be empowered to regularly monitor the hygiene practices of the people in the markets and sanction them, if there is a need.



7. **Enhance collaboration via** Public Private Partnerships and improve interagency coordination between state and local government to streamline food safety efforts and ensure a unified response to incidents.
8. **Support research and innovation:** Increase funding for research on new methods and technologies to improve food safety and bring researchers, industry experts, and policymakers together to develop and implement cutting-edge food safety solutions.

## Conclusion:

Ensuring the safety of our food supply is a shared responsibility that requires concerted effort from all stakeholders. By implementing these policy recommendations, Kebbi State can significantly reduce the incidence of foodborne illnesses, protect public health, and enhance the economic vitality of the food sectors.

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This policy brief is intended to guide strategic actions and foster discussions on enhancing food safety in Kebbi State. For further information or to discuss these recommendations in more detail, please do not hesitate to contact the RSM2SNF project via Mrs. Amadi Grace (the Project Management Assistant) using 09162066036 or [grcraji@gmail.com](mailto:grcraji@gmail.com).

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