



Basket of food for a traditional wedding in Kaya, Burkina Faso, December 2013. Photo: Alassane Pafadnam

## WHAT ARE PEOPLE EATING?

Views from *Life in a Time of Food Price Volatility*

Mrs S., town hall secretary, Kaya, Burkina Faso, 2013

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This case study is one of several produced to accompany *Help Yourself!*, the second year synthesis report from the *Life in a Time of Food Price Volatility* research project. Other case studies, country reports, synthesis reports, and further information about the project can be found at [www.oxfam.org.uk/foodprices](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/foodprices)



Mrs S. is a 50-year-old secretary for the town hall, and lives with her husband and daughter in Kaya, Burkina Faso.

Mrs S. earns a comfortable CFA 500,000 per year. Yet, as she spends CFA 300,000 on school fees and supplies for her youngest daughter, she relies on her other children for financial support. She tells us that life is expensive and that wages do not cover expenses.

Mrs S. suffers from diabetes. However, she explains that the stock of drugs is often insufficient, so while she should have an injection of insulin twice a day, she often goes a week without it.

Good harvests of millet, maize and sorghum ensured that prices of most food crops were relatively stable in Burkina Faso in 2013, but they remain above the five-year price average.

Mrs S. tells us that her and her husband do not eat well, eating just enough to survive. Their meals almost never change and consist mainly of rice and vegetables.

For breakfast, they have bread with tea or the remainder of the previous day's meal. Lunch and dinner always consist of *tô* (thick millet porridge), rice and beans.

Her daughter does not like *tô* or beans. Unfortunately, Mrs S. explains that their meals cannot be improved as they have to spend the remainder of their budget on school fees.

Mrs S. is of a generation of Burkinabe who lived when the state had an array of mechanisms in place to ensure that citizens had access to food. Many of these mechanisms were discontinued in the 1990s. Some of them, such as pilot shops where staple foods are sold at fixed prices, are being reintroduced in the aftermath of the 2008 food riots that saw thousands taking to the streets protesting against the unaffordability of food.

When asked about local food assistance, Mrs S. tells us that she received 15 bags of corn flour from OCADES (Caritas Burkina) and another seven bags of corn flour from a local social action association.

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For further information on the issues raised in this paper please e-mail [research@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:research@oxfam.org.uk)

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