



FEMOZ

FOOD ENVIRONMENTS MOZAMBIQUE

International Conference on Rural Food Environments

Challenges for achieving enhanced Food and Nutrition Security

Date: February (exact dates to be confirmed)

Location: Maputo

Language: English and Portuguese (simultaneous translation)

Format: Hybrid attendance

Introduction/Description

The international conference on rural food environments organised in Maputo aims to provide knowledge exchange and productive discussions on the characteristics and challenges of rural food environments of the Global South while also seeking to explore innovative ideas to strengthen their resilience. The conference is aimed at interested researchers, practitioners and students from various disciplines in the fields of food and nutrition security.

Food environments are under severe pressure for several reasons. A non-resilient food environment endangers food and nutrition security and the health status of most of the population. Climate change, natural disasters, rampant food price inflation, rapid urbanisation, armed conflicts, and challenges in implementing national food security and nutrition policies are all factors that condition food systems and environments and, ultimately, the food security of rural populations.

This international conference is organised by the FEMOZ project consortium ("Strengthening the Resilience of Rural Food Environments in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change in Mozambique"), constituted by the following institutions Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM), University of Applied Sciences Cologne (TH Köln) and Frankenförderer Forschungsgesellschaft (FFG). FEMOZ is an applied, interdisciplinary research project assessing food environments and food and nutrition challenges in Mozambique since 2021.

The conference is organised into five thematic sessions. Each session will focus on specific topics and present its diversity in the form of lectures, workshops, films, panel discussions, and posters, among others.

We invite interested colleagues to participate in one of these sessions. Please submit a one-page abstract (ca. 250 words) or a poster outline by the 31 of July 2023 (email: info@femoz.de). Selected scientific contributions will be published in the conference proceedings. Please use the form on our website (www.femoz.de). Each session will include input from FEMOZ researchers on project outcomes.



Session 1: Rural food environments: theories, concepts and methodological approaches

Food environments play a crucial role in the food system and are a cornerstone of any policy intervention aimed at improving the food and nutrition security of the population concerned. The ways in which the food environment is related to the broader food system and its links to more sustainable diets and food security are some of the research questions that require innovative food environment concepts and effective measurement tools. Most concepts and tools for analysing food environments were initially developed for High Income Countries (HICs), with very few applications designed for Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs). This is even more pertinent when considering rural food environments in LMICs. In the latter context, we typically see natural food environments (including wild and cultivated) and informal food environments, such as open-air farmers' markets and street vendors. The characteristics of these food environments are different from those of formal food environments such as supermarkets, shops, or restaurants, which are much more prevalent in HICs. Food environments can be described according to several dimensions. Some of these are external to consumers, namely: (i) availability of food products, i.e., formal and informal markets or various natural (wild) food sources; (ii) dynamics/volatility of food prices; (iii) types of markets or sellers, and the diversity and specificities of the foods they provide; (iv) policies and regulations of markets and food safety and hygiene. These dimensions are interrelated with other dimensions of the food environment that are more in the personal domain of consumers, such as (v) physical accessibility to food, e.g., distance to food sources, travel time and transport possibilities, etc. All these dimensions collectively shape the individual ability to purchase food; (vi) Affordability, which is determined by food prices, their volatility, local food availability, impacts of natural disasters, as well as international price fluctuation and other global factors. Two other important dimensions of the personal domain for the analysis of food environments are (vii) desirability and (viii) desirability. The factors defining the latter two dimensions in the rural LMIC context are expected to be quite different from the known factors in HICs. The analysis and measurement of the latter dimensions are undoubtedly a challenge.

Session 2: Rural livelihoods: resilience and food security in the context of disaster risk

Session 2 addresses food security and disaster risks for rural smallholder households. It looks at the impact of climate change and discusses measures to strengthen the resilience of rural households. What local strategies are in place for disaster preparedness? How farmers manage disaster risks, and how they cope with the negative impacts of climate change on their livelihoods and food and nutrition security. What are the most promising measures to promote food and nutrition security seen in the context of natural disasters? The discussion should consider different types of disasters, such as floods, droughts, cyclones, and fires, review the impacts in a context of varying degrees of vulnerability in rural areas, and consider the specific situation of female- or child-headed households, refugees, displaced persons, and others. The range of possible responses will differ according to the rural households' socio-economic situation. Intervention measures should be targeted and adapted to the specific needs of vulnerable groups.

Session 3: Strengthening food environments: policy, governance and academy

Coherent government policies, inter-institutional coordination, adequate implementation of national strategies at the local level, and promotion of professional capacities to design policies and monitor impacts are key elements when it comes to resilient food environments. This session will address the requirements of national food policies and the challenges involved in operationalising and implementing them. Harmonising food policies across different sectors and public institutions (e.g., agriculture, health, education environment and human welfare) is one of the most demanding tasks in terms of policy actions and their successful implementation. Therefore, it is essential here to adopt approaches and instruments to benchmark the implementation of policies that affect food environments and prioritise actions. A particular challenge for policy and action formulation involves understanding the relationship between food environments, climate change and disaster risk. Given the increasing task of adapting food environments to climate change, combining the two policy fields seems vital. Higher education can anticipate and help by training experts capable of understanding the two policy fields and serving as a facilitator between them. Furthermore, research should focus on measuring the impact of climate change and disaster risk on food environments and vice versa. This session will focus on implementing food policies in different domains for improving food environments in Mozambique, taking into account the different regional and international experiences, which will allow observing the complementarities of these policies, including their dysfunctionality.

Session 4: The role of Neglected or Underutilised Crop Species (NUS) for rural food security

Mozambique has faced major challenges related to ensuring Food and Nutrition Security (FNS). The causes are multidimensional, highlighting the poor agricultural production and productivity, aggravated by the increasing amount and scale of extreme climate phenomena that affect a considerable part of more than 70% of the population whose main source of subsistence is agriculture. International research emphasises the role of wild crops, known as Non-Conventional Food Plants (NCPs). Resistant to the effects of climate change, these wild crops are seen as an alternative food source as they contain vitamins and micronutrients crucial for the development of the human body. However, studies on NUS in Mozambique are still limited and far between. The recommendations of the existing studies have not yet been implemented at a level to measure their impact on the level of FNS in the population. The main objective of Session 4 is to stimulate debate on the feasibility of the promotion, commercialisation and consumption of NUS, considering their socio-cultural, economic, environmental, medicinal and nutritional value. To this end, academics, researchers, processors/traders of NUS, and the general public are invited to attend the conference for a shared reflection on the potential role of NUS and the challenges to the stabilisation of FNS, particularly in a context where food sources are negatively influenced by climate change and natural disasters.

Session 5: Poster session: food environment networks and current research projects

Session 5 presents selected projects, initiatives and networks dealing with food environments in the context of disaster risk and climate change. Our FEMOZ partners will present reports on their work: SETSAN (Technical Secretariat for Food Security and Nutrition), INGD (National Institute for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management), ORAM (Rural Mutual Aid Association), ROSA (Food Sovereignty Network), and Energy Store. In addition, we invite local, regional and international networks, as well as research, advisory, monitoring or training initiatives, to participate with posters: international associations, including INFORMAS¹, FERN², SUN Movement, FEWS NET³. Mozambican ministries dealing with Food Security and Nutrition, such as MISAU (Ministry of Health), MADER (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development) and MINEDH (Ministry of Education and Human Development), as well as national multi-stakeholder platforms (National Council for Food Security and Nutrition, the Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, and others), will also present their work. International agencies such as FAO (SUSTENTA Programme), USAID (FANTA project), UNDP, and WFP will be invited to present their programmes, strategies and approach to promote resilient food environments. Universities and research institutions within and outside Mozambique will have the opportunity to present posters on research results and methodological approaches.

¹ INFORMAS (International Network for Food and Obesity/non-communicable diseases Research, Monitoring and Action Support)

² FERN (Food and Environment Networking)

³ FEWS NET (Famine Early Warning Systems Networks)

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