



Street food is a major source of cheap, nutritious and fresh food. In Bangkok, it is estimated that half of the food budget is spent on outdoor prepared meals (Carrillo-Rodriguez, Reed, 2018). In Hanoi, street markets (whether informal or not) remain the main source for fresh products, including fish and meat.



The Street Food Project

« Street Food » is a 2 year project gathering geographers and biologists to investigate street foods in 4 cities. In South-east Asia, we work in Bangkok (Thailand) and Hanoi (Vietnam), where street food vendors and markets have faced increasingly coercitive regulations.



However, street food vendors are subject to an increased control and their ability to sell in the street is restricted.

- ▶ In Bangkok since 2016: enforcement of a city-wide eviction of street vendors
- ▶ In Hanoi: ban on street vendors in 2008 in parts of the city, and eviction of several street markets



- Rationales for such policies:
- To facilitate the traffic flow: in highly congested cities, mobility is given priority over the food service that street food provides;
 - To improve the safety of street-vended food,

Several issues emerge, some of which affecting urban food security.

- ▶ First, in Hanoi, the main concern of consumers is about pesticides residues. The safety risks that consumers and sellers perceive are different from the safety risks that the local authorities want to address through the regulations. Hence: their being and consumption behaviours may not be adjusted.
- ▶ Second, the eviction may reduce food accessibility, especially for less mobile households such as elderly people.
- ▶ Third, street food is cheaper than other food options. The crackdown on street food vending may result in a higher food budget, or a shift to a cheaper food basket. It is therefore a challenge for households who already spend a significant part of their budget on food. In Hanoi, low-income households typically dedicate more than half of their expenditures to food.
- ▶ Forth, street food vending is a source of livelihoods, specifically for marginalised and low-income groups such as rural-urban migrants. It is also an entrepreneurial initiative, particularly for people who may struggle to enter the formal job market (such as women in charge of the care of their children and parents).
- The need for improved food safety favours modern retailing and supermarkets. In Hanoi, mobile street food vending is not even mentioned in the retail planning of the Department of Industry and Trade.



Conclusion: The current trends on street food regulation affect underprivileged individuals' access to cheap and nutritious food. **These dynamics are increasing food injustice.** We argue that **street food vending contributes to fair, diversified and efficient urban food systems.** Food safety issues can be addressed without jeopardising this iconic feature of the Southeast Asian food systems.