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How responsive are nutrients in India? Some recent evidence

by Jaya Jumrani

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How responsive are nutrients in India? Some recent evidence*

Jaya Jumrani[†]

July 2021

Abstract

The relationship between nutrient intake and income is an issue of huge policy relevance, especially in the developing world. Using large-scale nationally representative data from 1993-94 to 2011-12, this paper analyzes the demand responsiveness of nutrient intakes to changes in income for both rural and urban India. It also investigates the changes in food consumption structure and discerns that intake of cereals and fruits & vegetables are declining while animal-origin foods and oils & fats have been on the rise. The study adopts three estimation approaches i.e., parametric, semi-parametric and non-parametric estimation models to obtain robust nutrient-income elasticity estimates for calories, proteins and fats. The parametric (OLS) calorie-expenditure elasticities range between 0.42 and 0.58 and are lower than those estimated for proteins and fats. Parametric (IV) elasticities have also declined over time, and are mostly lower than OLS estimates. This work establishes potential non-linearities between nutrient intakes and household incomes, which echoes that it is imperative to evaluate the effect of income over the entire nutrient intake distribution and not just at the means. Given the current landscape of India's double-burden nutrition economy, findings from this study would be useful for designing apt nutritional interventions and public health policies.

JEL Codes: O13, Q18, D12

*Preliminary draft – please do not circulate or cite without author's permission. Contributed paper prepared for presentation at the 31st International Conference of Agriculture Economists, August 17-31, 2021.

[†]ICAR-National Institute of Agricultural Economics and Policy Research (ICAR-NIAP), New Delhi, India; Department of Economics, Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi, New Delhi, India.