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## Historical matrices: a method for monitoring changes in seasonal consumption patterns in Mongolia

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### • Introduction

This note reports on the use of matrices for evaluating the impact of economic liberalisation on consumption patterns in Mongolia. They represent just one of many participatory research techniques that have been used since 1991 in a collaborative research and training project with pastoral communities in Mongolia (see other papers in this issue).

### • Seasonal consumption matrices

Changing household income and expenditure patterns following the wide-ranging agrarian reforms are reflected in changing consumption patterns. Most important among these reforms has been the dismantling of the collectivised state which formerly organised livestock and livestock product marketing, and the supply of flour and other food items and consumer goods.

Tables 1 and 2 show seasonal consumption matrices of two households, a richer household from Tariat district in the central forest/mountain steppes, and a poorer one from Erdene in the desert-steppe zone. The households had previously been ranked according to their wealth status. There are two matrices for each household, the first shows the seasonal pattern of household consumption during the *negdel* period, five years ago, and the second, the seasonal pattern for 1992.

These matrices were constructed by asking each informant to name the different foods that are/were consumed by the household and then to give each food item a score against each month of the year. The total available score for each month was 10.

This fixed method of scoring was used to encourage informants to make precise choices about the relative importance of each food item in a given month. A high score (e.g. 4 or 5) meant the item was a primary food source during that month. A low score (e.g. 1 or 2) meant that little of that particular item was consumed during the month.

**Table 1. Seasonal consumption matrix of a wealthy household, Tariat Sum, Arhangai Province (Informant: D. Janjahuu)**

5 Years Ago	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Meat	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3
Flour	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4
Milk	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
Milk products	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2

1992	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
3	4	4	4	4	4	3	3		3	4	5	5
Flour	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	-	-
Milk	1	1	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	2
Milk products	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	3

**Table 2. Seasonal Consumption Matrix of a Poorer Household: Erdene Sum, Dornogobi Province (Informant: G. Tudevbar)**

5 Years Ago	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Meat	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	4	5
Flour	3	4	4	5	5	4	3	2	3	4	4	3
Milk	2	2	2	2	2	4	2	2	2	2	1	1
Milk Products	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	4	3	1	1	1

1992	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Meat	6	6	7	4	4	3	2	2	2	5	5	5
Flour	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Milk	2	2	1	4	4	5	5	4	4	3	3	3
Milk Products	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	3	1	1	1

The matrices show that consumption patterns have changed significantly over the past five years, since privatisation and decollectivisation. Flour was previously the staple food throughout the year in Erdene and Tariat, with additional meat consumption in winter and milk/milk products in the summer. With current shortages and high costs, flour consumption has been severely reduced in Erdene and, in some cases, almost eliminated from the diet in Tariat, to be replaced by increased consumption of meat and milk products over periods beyond the seasonal norm.

Meat is now the main food, consumed between November and June, with months between July and October divided equally between milk, milk products and meat. As a result many households are slaughtering more animals for winter household consumption and have sold fewer milk products during the summer.

The richer household in Tariat consumed half as much flour as during previous years but still more than the poorer household in Erdene. The shortage of flour is actually more acute in Tariat than in Erdene which indicates that the richer households here are not having to adjust

their consumption patterns as much as the poorer. The poorer households compensated for the lack of flour with significantly increased meat consumption. This is largely because Erdene households have fewer milk products available to carry them through the winter months. In Tariat, the level of milk production is high so households can fall back on consumption of milk products where necessary.

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#### REFERENCE

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