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**Estimating Food Poverty Directly from Consumption Data,
Comparison with Official Method, and Suggestions for Change**

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Abstract

A quality assessment of the basic data from the two main sources of food consumption, Food Consumption Survey (FCS) and Family Income and Expenditures Survey (FIES), is made. National Statistical Coordination Board's (NSCB) official method of estimating food poverty incidence is not a direct user of food consumption from these sources, but relies instead on prescribed menus to compute food poverty lines. The method performed poorly when validated using FCS data. Alternative methods are discussed and tried using FCS and FIES data. Two are money-based methods that compute a food poverty line and compare this with either per capita income or expenditure. Another more promising group is composed of non-money based distribution-free methods, relying mainly on the food consumption converted into energy and other nutrients. One fits an empirical cumulative distribution function of per capita dietary energy consumption and uses this to estimate the food poverty incidence for any choice of energy threshold. A second eschews the difficulties and distortions associated with per capita calculations and rely instead on a comparison between the family's total consumption and its recommended energy and nutrient intake. The numerical results point to much higher food poverty incidences than generally perceived, the latter conditioned perhaps by official estimates. The need for empirical research to find better data capture methods for collecting food consumption data and for validating the numerical results from this study is highlighted.

Keywords: *Food poverty, dietary energy consumption, cost of basic needs.*