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ASSESSMENT OF REGIONAL DIFFERENCES IN FOOD AVAILABILITY IN KAZAKHSTAN

The article examines the state of food security in Kazakhstan through an analysis of the regional availability of basic foodstuffs based on official statistical data for 2024. The actual consumption of key product categories is analyzed and its deviation from scientifically based physiological norms is compared. The presence of stable regional imbalances has been revealed, manifested in the differentiation of the nutrition structure between industrial, agricultural and highly urbanized regions. It is determined that the consumption of meat, fish, dairy products, fruits and vegetables continues to vary significantly depending on the economic characteristics of the territories. The use of comparative and statistical analysis made it possible to trace the relationship between economic parameters and the ability of households to maintain a diet close to the recommended standards. The analysis showed that regions with low incomes and a significant proportion of the population below the poverty line show a decrease in consumption of those products that determine the quality of nutrition and the sustainability of the food environment. This is especially evident in the south and west of the country, where price sensitivity and underdeveloped food infrastructure limit access to a varied diet, even with an overall increase in economic indicators. The results obtained highlight the key role of the economic environment in shaping food accessibility and point to the need to continue policies aimed at reducing territorial differences. Increasing household incomes, supporting local producers, and strengthening logistics chains can all increase the sustainability of regional food systems and bring actual nutrition closer to rational parameters. The findings of the study are of practical importance and can be used in the development of regional and national food policy strategies aimed at long-term strengthening of food security in Kazakhstan.

Keywords: food security, food consumption, economic accessibility, poverty level, regional disparities, rational norms, population income.

Кілт сөздер: азық-түлік қауіпсіздігі, азық-түлік тұтыну, экономикалық қолжетімділік, кедейлік деңгейі, өңірлік айырмашылықтар, рационалды нормалар, халықтың кірістері.

Ключевые слова: продовольственная безопасность, потребление продуктов питания, экономическая доступность, уровень бедности, региональные различия, рациональные нормы, доходы населения.

Introduction. The issue of food security has long become an indicator of the sustainability of Kazakhstan's socio-economic development. The practice of recent years shows that even with a serious agricultural potential and a favorable geographical location, the population's access to basic products is uneven. Observations of consumption dynamics highlight how strongly spatial differences affect the structure of nutrition and how sensitive the food environment remains to income fluctuations. In a number of territories, primarily with low purchasing power, household nutrition is kept within the minimum possible sets, while large cities are gradually shifting to a more diverse diet. The gap between them is noticeable even with a superficial comparison. Research interest in this topic has increased as regional disparities have become apparent not only in consumption volumes, but also in the ability of households to achieve rational standards. Comparing the indicators of various regions with the physiological standards approved by the national regulator allows us to see the hidden boundaries of food availability. In professional practice, I have repeatedly observed how the same products – meat, dairy products, fish,

vegetables – turn out to be "available" in different ways, depending on income and the territorial structure of the market. The regional picture is complicated by the fact that statistics record not only the physical presence of products, but also real consumption, which reacts to economic pressure much faster. Within the framework of the article, the aim of the study was to trace how economic differences shape the parameters of food accessibility in the regions of Kazakhstan and to what extent the actual consumption of the main categories of products corresponds to scientifically sound standards. The work uses data from the Bureau of National Statistics for 2024 - indicators on income, poverty distribution, and consumption structure. The information provides the basis for analysis, where the region is considered not as an administrative unit, but as a specific socio-economic environment with its own nutrition model. Two research approaches have been applied to solve this problem. A comparative analysis revealed discrepancies between the actual consumption values and the standards, which makes it possible to interpret food security without excessive declarativeness. Statistical analysis made it possible to assess the relationship between income levels, the prevalence of poverty and the ability of households to maintain a diet that approaches rational values. This approach is appropriate because structural changes in the regional economy have a direct impact on the consumer basket. The results obtained form a generalized idea of the state of food accessibility in the country and demonstrate the steady dependence of consumption on the economic environment of the region. The research material expands the understanding of the factors affecting food security and highlights the need for a meaningful government policy aimed at reducing territorial differentiation and strengthening food sustainability.

Literature Review. Interest in food security issues was formed long before the advent of modern methods for assessing it, but it has been in recent years that it has been considered as a key element of national sustainability. An impressive body of work has been accumulated in the literature, where food accessibility is described through the prism of economic and social factors.

In the study by Dulamabayeva and Zhunusova [1], attention is drawn to the fact that the burden on the consumer market of Kazakhstan arises due to the high cost of a number of food items. The authors show that rising prices and limited supply in certain regions create a situation in which the risk of food sustainability disruption becomes systemic. This observation is consistent with the trends noted in the practice of analyzing regional markets.

The work of Kabdullina et al. [2] complements this perspective, demonstrating how strongly economic cycles and the expansion of the presence of imported products affect the purchasing power of households. In conditions of price volatility, the deviation of actual consumption from the regulatory parameters increases, which has been repeatedly confirmed in empirical studies. The authors' approach reflects the same idea as in our observations: increasing dependence on import supply leads to increased vulnerability of the food market.

A significant contribution to the study of regional differences was made by the research of Kabdullina et al. [3]. The paper emphasizes that lagging behind rational norms is typical primarily for low-income territories. This is not just a statistical deviation, but a consequence of structural constraints, when the economic environment does not allow households to maintain the recommended diet. Such results have become one of the reasons for the need for a systematic rethink of regional food policy. Other studies are expanding the understanding of the factors influencing consumption.

Kurmanov et al. [4] focus on the shortage of production of key categories of products - meat, fish, vegetables - which makes it difficult to achieve rational values even with a sufficient level of income.

The study of Kussainov et al. [5] deepens the discussion, showing that poverty becomes not just a limiting factor, but an obstacle that directly shapes the structure of nutrition. The author considers it as a systemic barrier that restricts access to high-quality products.

The work of Dowler and O'Connor [6] allows us to look at the problem in a broader context. Analyzing the practices of Ireland and the United Kingdom, the researchers conclude that government commitments in the field of food security require rethinking, and social determinants should be considered as an integral part of food policy. The approach is conceptually important for Kazakhstan, as the mechanism for ensuring food sustainability is formed not only through the agricultural sector, but also through social instruments.

The totality of the presented studies forms an analytical framework within which the issues of income distribution, poverty and food availability are interrelated. Kazakhstan is making progress in increasing food production and exports, but regional differences in consumption patterns persist. This circumstance leads to the need for a more detailed study of the impact of economic parameters on food availability. The

presented study develops this line, complementing the existing scientific discussion with new data and updated conclusions about regional food security features.

Main part. The issue of food security inevitably goes beyond the agricultural sector and becomes the foundation of any country's socio-economic sustainability. Kazakhstan is no exception: the pattern of food consumption is shaped by regional specifics, income differences, logistical conditions, and historically established patterns of nutrition.

When referring to the regional level, it becomes noticeable that the availability of food is built up as a result of many factors interacting in each region in its own way. An analytical comparison of actual consumption with rational norms allows us to see this intertwining more clearly.

The physiological norms approved by the order of the Ministry of National Economy [7] serve not only as a reference point, but also as a kind of framework in which real food practices can be considered.

The parameters set a healthy guideline that reflects the minimum required level of consumption of meat, fish, milk, vegetables, and other significant categories. In expert work, we have repeatedly observed how deviations from these norms manifest themselves in regions with varying intensity - in some places it is minimal, in others it becomes stable.

Comparing the actual values with the standards makes it possible not only to identify differences, but also to reconstruct the mechanisms underlying regional food availability. This study is based on data from the Bureau of National Statistics for 2024 and examines the consumption of the main categories of products in a territorial context. The consumption matrix shown in table 1 demonstrates how heterogeneously consumption volumes are distributed, even in cases where national indicators look relatively stable. The approach is justified because regional dynamics often show a picture that contrasts with the average data.

Later, a comparison of the results obtained with economic characteristics (Table 2) makes it possible to understand exactly how income and poverty distribution shape the nutrition structure in each region. Such an analytical combination makes it possible to consider food availability not as a static set of figures, but as a reflection of socio-economic processes that manifest themselves in different ways in different parts of the country.

Table – 1

Food consumption per capita in the regions of Kazakhstan in 2024*

Region	Bread ¹	Meat ²	Fish ³	Milk ⁴	Eggs ⁵	Fruit ⁶	Vegetables ⁷
Republic of Kazakhstan	123.5	82.6	14.2	232.2	205.8	80.2	80.6
Abai	123.2	72.6	12.6	244.3	186.6	55.7	57.8
Akmola	116.6	93.3	19.4	294.6	288.5	81.7	67.2
Aktobe	115.8	66.6	12.1	202.6	173.8	76.3	61.8
Almaty	132.2	87.9	13.5	195.5	193.4	67.0	70.7
Atyrau	123.0	92.9	18.8	192.0	185.0	68.3	67.8
West Kazakhstan	135.7	86.0	19.6	217.3	197.4	80.4	74.3
Zhambyl	141.6	95.6	13.0	240.8	182.5	86.2	81.5
Zhetysu	149.6	97.2	14.0	254.5	155.2	74.0	87.5
Karaganda	107.7	88.6	15.0	288.8	304.1	88.8	76.3
Kostanay	118.2	88.9	18.6	245.2	250.9	79.7	84.8
Kyzylorda	131.2	65.0	16.0	166.5	170.2	78.5	78.9
Mangystau	102.0	90.1	10.4	201.5	145.6	81.2	70.2
Pavlodar	117.4	88.6	15.2	254.3	199.6	73.0	72.4
North Kazakhstan	109.1	80.0	21.0	247.1	261.4	82.1	70.0
Turkestan	168.2	64.1	12.5	208.6	166.6	71.7	99.2
Ulytau	113.5	82.1	11.9	255.1	237.9	75.9	72.2
East Kazakhstan	112.5	87.2	19.6	292.6	227.2	84.3	68.2
Astana city	101.4	87.2	12.9	264.3	249.8	100.2	88.0
Almaty city	96.5	91.8	14.7	268.3	217.0	97.8	97.0
Shymkent city	124.9	59.8	5.4	157.5	190.4	68.9	86.6

* Notes: 1) 1 – bread and cereal products, kg; 2 – meat and meat products, kg; 3 – fish and seafood, kg; 4 – milk and dairy products, kg; 5 – eggs, units; 6 – fruits, kg; 7 – vegetables, kg. 2) Compiled according to data from [8].

The material in table 1 shows a multi-layered picture of food consumption in the regions of Kazakhstan in 2024. Due to the external stability of the national averages, there is a very heterogeneous nutrition

structure, which is formed under the influence of local conditions, from income levels to agricultural specialization and lifestyle characteristics. Regional trajectories diverge so noticeably that the overall indicators lose their explanatory power without a territorial context.

The consumption of bread products remains high - 123.5 kg per capita. But behind this averaging there are two opposite poles. Zhetisu and Turkestan region show maximum values of 149.6 and 168.2 kg, respectively. Here, the traditional model of nutrition and a significant proportion of households running their own farms form a high level of consumption. A different picture is observed in large cities - Almaty and Astana consistently maintain minimum values of 96.5 and 101.4 kg. This indicates the gradual departure of the population of megacities from the grain dominant in the diet, which corresponds to the broader social trends of urbanized territories.

The structure of meat consumption reinforces the differences. The average of 82.6 kg is just a starting point for the analysis. Zhetisu, Zhambyl and Akmola regions demonstrate consistently high consumption, while Aktobe and Turkestan regions are located at the lower level. The gap between them highlights the dependence of the meat basket on income and local production potential. In the practice of analyzing food markets, such differentiation occurs regularly and indicates different strategies of households in responding to price dynamics.

Fish products record one of the most persistent asymmetries. The average is 14.2 kg, but the regional variation is significant - the North Kazakhstan, East Kazakhstan and West Kazakhstan regions show steadily high values, while Shymkent remains at the lowest point - 5.4 kg. Even during a period of rising incomes, the availability of fish continues to be determined by logistics, seasonality, and market infrastructure, factors that are particularly noticeable in shaping household demand and opportunities.

Consumption of dairy products reached the level of 232.2 kg. Special attention is drawn to the regions that have overcome the 250 kg mark - Akmola, Karaganda, Almaty, Astana. These territories demonstrate sustainable consumption, close to rational standards. On the opposite side are the Kyzylorda and Mangystau regions, as well as Shymkent, where the indicators are significantly lower. The influence of seasonality, transport restrictions and price sensitivity is most pronounced here, which is confirmed by our previous observations.

The fruit and vegetable basket follows a different logic. The average figures of 80.2 and 80.6 kg indicate a significant gap from the recommended levels. However, the dynamics differs within the regions - Astana and Almaty show an increase in fruit consumption (100.2 and 97.8 kg), while Turkestan stands out for a significant amount of vegetable consumption (99.2 kg), which is explained by the specialization of local agriculture. Urban areas are gradually expanding the food basket, while agrarian regions are reproducing the traditional nutrition model typical for households with limited dietary diversification.

Thus, table 1 reflects not so much a set of quantitative differences as a change in the structure of nutrition in conditions of heterogeneous economic growth. The observed gap between megacities and socially vulnerable territories persists, and the range of differences - from fish consumption to fruit - outlines the contours of food asymmetry, which remains one of the key problems of Kazakhstan's food security.

Turning to table 2, it is necessary to take into account that economic conditions - incomes of the population and the prevalence of poverty - form the basis for interpreting differences in consumption. The economic environment determines the capabilities of households and affects the ability of regions to maintain nutrition parameters close to rational values. Therefore, comparing income data with consumption figures is the next logical step.

Table – 2

Income levels and poverty rates across the regions of Kazakhstan in 2024*

Region	Average per capita nominal income (tenge/month)	Percentage of the population with incomes below the subsistence level (%)
Republic of Kazakhstan	215 979	5.0
Abai	184 607	7.3
Akmola	187 922	5.0
Aktobe	191 514	4.5
Almaty	154 919	3.8
Atyrau	329 734	2.9

West Kazakhstan	198 935	4.2
Zhambyl	150 627	5.5
Zhetysu	144 875	7.6
Karaganda	233 677	2.8
Kostanay	204 267	3.6
Kyzylorda	153 751	5.0
Mangystau	260 252	7.3
Pavlodar	229 108	3.9
North Kazakhstan	194 843	4.4
Turkestan	121 620	8.5
Ulytau	290 529	5.7
East Kazakhstan	230 718	4.1
Astana city	303 175	2.7
Almaty city	344 454	4.5
Shymkent city	139 044	5.6

**compiled by the authors based on the sources [9, 10, 11]*

The data in table 2 reflect not only the distribution of income by regions of Kazakhstan in 2024, but they demonstrate a stable structure of economic differences, which the growth of per capita incomes has not yet transformed. The total figure for the country reached 215,979 tenge, but this increase only highlighted the gap between territories with a developed economic base and regions where restrictions are systemic. The experience of analyzing regional budgets shows that income growth does not always enhance food availability, since mandatory expenditures and poor development of local food markets limit the ability of households to reach rational levels of consumption.

The upper part of the distribution is expected. Atyrau region (KZT 329,734) demonstrates income concentration, which correlates with a wider range of products and steady demand, which is confirmed by consumption data. Almaty and Astana - 344,454 and 303,175 tenge, respectively - form a different type of food behavior: the urban economy sets a preference for the quality and variety of the diet, and the reaction of households to price fluctuations is less drastic.

At the opposite pole is the Turkestan region with 121,620 tenge. The gap with the leading regions exceeds two times the value, which determines the structure of nutrition - in conditions of limited diversification of the local economy, incomes put pressure on the consumer basket much more strongly than is seen in average estimates. Similar patterns are observed in Mangystau and Zhetysu regions, where income growth is recorded, but its distribution remains uneven. This leads to the fact that some households do not reach a sustainable level of consumption, even with the improvement of macroeconomic indicators.

The structure of poverty increases economic polarization. The maximum values are recorded in Turkestan (8.5%) and Mangystau regions (7.3%). Here, the increased demographic burden and limited employment opportunities lead to the fact that food availability depends on seasonal price fluctuations and logistics infrastructure much more strongly than in other regions. In Atyrau, Karaganda regions and Astana, the share of the population with incomes below the subsistence level is minimal - 2.7-2.9%, which confirms the existence of a more stable environment for the formation of a balanced diet.

Thus, the relationship between the income level, the scale of poverty and the parameters of actual consumption is quite clear. Regions with high economic stability demonstrate indicators close to rational standards, while the southern and western regions face a situation where limited purchasing power remains a key barrier to quality nutrition. In 2024, this dependence remains crucial.

Reducing regional disparities requires comprehensive solutions. Income support is important, but it does not replace the development of a local food environment - conditions under which a product can be purchased not only physically, but also financially. Without strengthening infrastructure, expanding local production and stabilizing the price environment, the transition to sustainable nutrition in vulnerable regions is slowing down, despite the positive dynamics of macroeconomic indicators.

Conclusion. The analysis made it possible to trace how pronounced regional differences in the structure of food consumption in Kazakhstan are and how deeply they are rooted in the socio-economic environment. A comparison of the data showed that economic parameters - first of all, the level of income and the scale of poverty - form the basis on which food accessibility is built. When these parameters change, the logic of consumption itself changes, which underlines the crucial role of economic conditions in ensuring regional food security.

The scientific value of the work is related to the fact that the revealed relationship between economic characteristics and nutrition parameters sets the direction for cross-industry solutions. It becomes obvious that improving the quality of the food environment cannot be considered separately from the development of agriculture, distribution infrastructure, income policy and social support mechanisms for the population. This approach opens up the possibility for the formation of integrated strategies in which food security is understood not only as a sectoral issue, but also as an element of social development.

The practical findings of the study point to several priorities. Regional territories with high levels of poverty need to expand support tools, from subsidies to creating conditions for sustainable production and distribution of basic products. Educational work aimed at increasing the knowledge of the population about the structure of rational nutrition and reducing food losses is also becoming an important area. Equally important are incentives for the development of local industries that can reduce dependence on external supplies and increase the sustainability of food systems.

The prospects for further research are related to the assessment of the long-term impact of such measures. It is important to understand how the adjustment of economic and food policies affects household behavior, the dynamics of regional differences and the sustainability of the food environment. The answer to this question will make it possible to more accurately identify the tools that can strengthen Kazakhstan's food security and reduce existing imbalances.

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Сабыржан А., Тапенова Г.С., Таласпаева А.Е., Атызова А.Ж.

ҚАЗАҚСТАНДАҒЫ АЗЫҚ-ТҮЛІККЕ ҚОЛЖЕТІМДІЛІКТІҢ ӨНІРЛІК АЙЫРМАШЫЛЫҚТАРЫН БАҒАЛАУ

Андатпа

Мақалада 2024 жылғы ресми статистикалық деректер негізінде негізгі тамақ өнімдерінің өнірлік қолжетімділігін талдау арқылы Қазақстанның азық-түлік қауіпсіздігінің жай-күйі қарастырылды. Өнімнің

негізгі санаттарын нақты тұтыну талданды және оның ғылыми негізделген физиологиялық нормалардан ауытқуы салыстырылды. Өнеркәсіптік, аграрлық және жоғары урбанизацияланған аймақтар арасындағы тамақтану құрылымын саралауда көрінетін тұрақты аймақтық диспропорциялардың болуы анықталды. Ет, балық, сүт өнімдері, жемістер мен көкөністерді тұтыну аумақтардың экономикалық сипаттамаларына байланысты айтарлықтай өзгеріп отыратыны анықталды. Зерттеу салыстырмалы және статистикалық талдау әдістерін қолданды, бұл табыс деңгейі, кедейліктің таралуы және үй шаруашылықтарының ұсынылған нормаларға жақын диетаны сақтау мүмкіндіктері арасындағы байланысты бағалауға мүмкіндік берді. Табысы төмен және кедейлік шегінен төмен халықтың үлесі жоғары аймақтар азық-түлік сапасын анықтайтын тағамдарды жеткіліксіз тұтынумен сипатталатыны көрсетілген. Оңтүстік және батыс облыстарда баға сезімталдығына және азық-түлік инфрақұрылымының әлсіздігіне байланысты шектеулер сақталатыны анықталды. Жүргізілген талдау азық-түлікке қолжетімділікті қалыптастырудағы экономикалық факторлардың маңыздылығын растады және өңірлік диспропорцияларды төмендетуге бағытталған шараларды одан әрі дамыту қажеттігін айқындады. Табыстың артуы, жергілікті өндірісті қолдау және логистиканың жақсаруы азық-түлік қауіпсіздігін нығайтуға және халықтың теңгерімді тамақтануын қамтамасыз етуге қабілетті екендігі көрсетілген. Тұжырымдалған нәтижелер азық-түлік саясатының аймақтық және ұлттық стратегияларын әзірлеу үшін практикалық маңызға ие.

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ОЦЕНКА РЕГИОНАЛЬНЫХ РАЗЛИЧИЙ ПРОДОВОЛЬСТВЕННОЙ ДОСТУПНОСТИ В КАЗАХСТАНЕ

Аннотация

В статье рассмотрено состояние продовольственной безопасности Казахстана через анализ региональной доступности основных продуктов питания на основе официальных статистических данных за 2024 год. Проанализировано фактическое потребление ключевых категорий продуктов и сопоставлено его отклонение от научно обоснованных физиологических норм. Выявлено наличие устойчивых региональных диспропорций, проявляющихся в дифференциации структуры питания между промышленными, аграрными и высокоурбанизированными регионами. Определено, что потребление мяса, рыбы, молочной продукции, фруктов и овощей продолжает существенно варьировать в зависимости от экономических характеристик территорий.

В исследовании использованы методы сравнительного и статистического анализа, что позволило оценить связь между уровнем доходов, распространённостью бедности и возможностями домохозяйств поддерживать рацион, приближенный к рекомендованным нормам. Показано, что регионы с низкими доходами и высокой долей населения, находящегося ниже черты бедности, характеризуются недостаточным потреблением продуктов, определяющих качество питания. Выявлено, что в южных и западных областях сохраняются ограничения, связанные с ценовой чувствительностью и слабой продовольственной инфраструктурой.

Проведенный анализ подтвердил значимость экономических факторов в формировании продовольственной доступности и определил необходимость дальнейшего развития мер, направленных на снижение региональных диспропорций. Показано, что повышение доходов, поддержка локального производства и улучшение логистики способны укрепить продовольственную безопасность и обеспечить сбалансированное питание населения. Сформулированные результаты обладают практической значимостью для разработки региональных и национальных стратегий продовольственной политики.

