

Food safety from farm-to-table: A qualitative study to co-create Lassa fever control strategies in Ondo State, July 2024

Abdulazeez Kuna¹, Michael Adeoye¹, Olawunmi Johnson², Winifred Ukponu¹, Ibrahim Gobir¹

¹Georgetown Global Health, Abuja, Nigeria, ²Department of Planning, Research and Statistics, Ondo State Ministry of Health, Ondo State, Nigeria

&Corresponding author: Abdulazeez Kuna, Georgetown Global Health, Abuja, Nigeria, **Email:** akuna@gghnigeria.org

Citation: Abdulazeez Kuna et al., Food safety from farm-to-table: A qualitative study to co-create Lassa fever control strategies in Ondo State, July 2024. *Journal of Interventional Epidemiology and Public Health*. 2025;8(ConfProc5):00286.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37432/JIEPH-CONFPRO5-00286>

LINK: <https://afenet-journal.org/food-safety-from-farm-to-table-a-qualitative-study-to-co-create-lassa-fever-control-strategies-in-ondo-state-july-2024/>

Received: 31/05/2025 **Accepted:** 09/07/2025 **Published:** 11/08/2025

Keywords: Lassa fever, food hygiene, contamination, food safety

This is part of the proceedings of the ECOWAS 2nd Lassa fever International Conference in Abidjan, September 8 – 11, 2025

© Abdulazeez Kuna et al. *Journal of Interventional Epidemiology and Public Health*. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution International 4.0 License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Introduction

Ingestion of contaminated foods has been identified as an infection route for Lassa Fever (LF). Food processing and storage practices, such as food drying on the ground and prolonged storage in warehouses, increase the risk of food contamination and infection in people who consume these foods. Breaking this disease transmission pathway is critical for reducing the prevalence of LF. This study was conducted to optimize LF control by co-creating solutions for challenges identified by affected communities.

Methods

A qualitative study was conducted in 2 high-burden Local Government Areas of Ondo State, Akure South and Owo. 8 key informant interviews and 6 focus group discussions were conducted with traders, religious leaders, politicians, youth groups, LF survivors, artisans, and healthcare workers, with data collected using voice recorders. Data were analyzed manually through transcription, coding, and theme development and archived on an organizational shared drive with strict access to the project team.

Results

Food safety gaps from “farm to table” promoting LF transmission were identified. The abundance of rats in farms suggests a first contamination point.

Participants reported grain contamination by rats, with vendors often repacking contaminated grains to conceal evidence of rat infestation. Poor hygiene and improper waste management in markets and residential areas were prevalent, creating favourable conditions for rat infestation and food contamination. Solutions proffered included improvement in personal hygiene, use of processing and storage tools that keep rats from food, investment in waste management infrastructure, coordinated and sustained health education campaigns, and monitored food production.

Conclusion

Food safety is crucial in halting LF transmission. Understanding food processing and storage practices while leveraging existing community structures is a strategic combination that can significantly reduce food contamination, which can be strengthened with a whole-of-society approach and governmental support.