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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The division of the economy into two sectors namely organized and unorganized has a long heritage. The unorganized sector may be defined as one of the many economic and productive activities. Street food vending is unorganized and diverse as well as informal in nature. The unorganized sector of the economy is primarily labour intensive but less rewarding to the workers in comparison to the efforts put in production. According to the Central Statistical Organization, “the unorganized sector includes all those unincorporated enterprises, the household industries which are not regulated by any legislation and which do not maintain annual accounts or balance sheets”. The unorganized sector, as a concept is unique to India because in other developing countries, it is referred to as the informal sector or the secondary sector. Attempts to define unorganized sector as separate analytical
category and distinguish it from organized, formal and primary sector have not been successful¹.

1.1 Informal Sector

The origin of the term and the concept of informal sector has been very lucidly traced by an ILO paper². The term was first said to have been used by Hart to describe the part of urban labour force, which falls outside the organized labour market³. The International Labour Organization (1972) defines the term ‘informal sector’ as very small scale units producing and distributing goods and services and consisting largely of independent, self-employed persons in urban areas of developing countries, some of whom also employ family labour or a few hired workers, which operate with little capital or none at all; which operate at a low level of productivity; which utilize a low level of technology and skills; and which provide very low and irregular incomes and highly unstable employment to those who work in it. They are informal in the sense that they are unregistered, unrecorded in official statistics; they tend to have little or no access to organized markets, to formal education and training institutions.

The reasons for the growth of the informal sector are important from the point of view of developing policies. With the adoption of the structural adjustment programmes, street vendors tend to lose ground in the formal sectors of the economy. Stagnating and falling incomes of households due to poor performance of the economy also lead to an increase in entry of street food vendors into the market. The process of globalization, export-oriented industrialization and relocation of industries from the developed to the developing countries also lead to an increase in employment in the informal sector.

In developing countries, economic activities play a significant role in the informal sector where the opportunity of earning income is rapidly increasing with the development of the economy. Most of the unskilled and illiterate are absorbed in the informal sector, when they are not employed in the formal sector. The informal sector thus acts as a training ground by providing practical skills and entrepreneurial talents for a large chunk of people who are cut off from the mainstream of life. What makes the system more attractive to young people is that they pay no fee during training but actually receive a certain amount of money from their master to cover their food and sometimes transport.

The informal sector is facing enormous problems, in spite of many advantages, from different quarters. Howard Pack described the informal sector as, "sleeping giants needing only to be awakened by a new magic flute playing a melody transcribed from the experience of countries which fit a very different development typology". The hundreds of thousands of persons in developing countries who are trapped in a situation of cumulative deprivations invariably work in the informal sector.

The reasons for the growth of the street food vending are important from the point of view of developing policies. Stagnating and falling incomes of households due to poor performance of the economy also lead to increased entry into street food vending. The street food vending activity plays a significant role in the informal sector where the opportunity for earning income is rapidly increasing. It acts as a training ground by providing practical skills and business talents for a large chunk of people who are cut off from the main stream of life. The total number of street vendors in the country is estimated to be around 1 crore.

One of the common sights in urban centers in the country today is the street food stall. Though an age old business, street food has gained popularity in the recent years due to various reasons which include rapid

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urbanization, increased rural to urban migration and the need for self-employment due to lack of other job/employment opportunities, the need to augment family income, the increasing cost of meals in traditional food service facilities and the changes in the life style of the people such as the increased need to eat outside the homes.\textsuperscript{8}

The expansion of street food vending has brought with it both disadvantages and advantages. The former include obstruction of road traffic and unhealthy food handling systems. On the other hand, the street food business has been seen as an additional income opportunity especially for women and children and a convenient source of cheap cooked foods particularly for the lower income groups of the society. To condemn these enterprises on the basis of the disadvantages they pose may therefore tantamount to ignoring the unemployment situation and consequently aggravating the state of poverty prevailing in the country.\textsuperscript{9}

Street vendors are distributing goods and services and consist largely of independent, self employed retailers in developing countries, some of them also employ family labourer or a few hired workers which operate at a low level of productivity which utilize low level of skills and which provide


very low irregular incomes and highly unstable employment for those who work in it.  

In developing countries, street vending activities play a significant role where the opportunity of earning income is rapidly increasing with the development of the economy. Street vending is providing practical skills and entrepreneurial talents for a large chunk of people who are cut off from the main stream of life. 

1.2 Meaning and Definition of "Street Food Vendor"

Street vendor means a person who offers goods for sale to the public at large without having a permanent built up structure from which to sell. Street vending may be stationary in the sense that they occupy space on the pavements or other public or private spaces or they may be mobile in the sense that they move from place to place by carrying their wares on push carts or in baskets on their heads.

Street-vended foods or its equivalent “street foods” which are defined as foods and beverages prepared and sold by vendors in streets and other public places for immediate consumption or consumption at a later time without further processing or preparation. This definition includes fresh fruits

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and vegetables which are sold outside authorized market areas for immediate consumption.\textsuperscript{13}

The terms "street foods" as used in this study refers to the vending of ready-to-eat foods in permanent structures or mobile units.\textsuperscript{14}

1.3 Categories of Street Foods Vendors

Street vendors may be stationary in the sense that they occupy space on pavements or other public or private spaces or they may be mobile in the sense that they are moving from one place to another place. There are three main categories of street foods vendors.\textsuperscript{15}

1. ‘Mobile Vendors’ includes those vendors carrying baskets, hung on balancing poles on their shoulders, bicycle, tricycle, and motorcycle, vendors of bread or ice-cream, as well as trucks or vans selling commissioned food stuffs such as ice-cream.

2. ‘Semi-Mobile’ vendors include those selling from carts, which may be stationary or moved from one site to another.

3. ‘Stationary’ vendors may sell their foods from permanent structures at certain points in the city or even in front of shops, providing tables and chairs for immediate consumption.\textsuperscript{16}

1.4 Special Characteristics of Vending Operations

1. The business is not located at definite points permanently, the venue of business changes at varying intervals.

2. The business is governed by hardly any regulative or protective laws.

3. The business covers a wide diversity of works, operation and products.\(^{17}\)

4. The business contribution to self employment generation opportunity in the country.

5. The vendors are found in retail trade of various products ranging from natural produce to processed and prepared products.

6. Long hours of work involving continuous strain; they work from very early hours of morning until sunset, some times beyond that. They work in unsafe and unhealthy conditions.

7. They occupy the lowest position in the long chain of hierarchy i.e., their economic conditions are as poor as that of a coolie.

8. The street food vendors are the exploited class who eke out a pitiable living under conditions of penury and poverty.

9. It is the economic compulsion, more than any other factor, which motivates the vendors to do the business.\(^{18}\).


1.5 Factors Contributing to the Growth of Street Vendors

1. Urbanization: - Because of socio-economic changes in many countries, the street food sector has experienced growth during the past few decades. Rapid urbanization with the movement of people from rural areas to urban centers had led to a need for feeding large numbers of working people on a daily basis away from their residences. 19 50 percent of the world’s population is living and working in urban situations. Because of the distance between their home and place of work, lack of available quick transportation, and limited time, workers and students are unable to travel home to eat their mid-day meals. Instead, they preferred to eat outside of the home, especially those who are single and living on their own. 20

2. Growth of Urban Poor Women: - Another factor contributing to the growth of street vendors and street vended foods in particular is the growing number of urban poor and the mobilization of women into the work force. Street food vendors provide inexpensive and nutritious foods to the less-well-to-do sections of the urban populace at convenient places. 21

The street foods are not only far cheaper than restaurant or fast foods, but actually much more cost-effective than even home prepared foods, especially if the time spent on shopping and cooking is taken into account.

Even those who earn minimum wage are ensured a relatively nutritious meal for the day.\textsuperscript{22}

Furthermore, many women are participating in the economy, and this has constrained their ability to prepare elaborate meals for their families, thus necessitating them to procure street foods as a supplement to other home-cooked foods, as is the norms in Thailand and Malaysia. With huge market demand for affordable and nutritious food, it is therefore not surprising that the numbers of street foods vendors are growing, whether in a legal or illegal frame work.\textsuperscript{23}

3) \textbf{Urban Employment}: - The street food trade provides numerous employment opportunities and a means of survival for millions of urbanites and peri-urban dwellers. In some cities, for example in Iloilo City, the Philippines, Bogor Indonesia, street food vending absorbed upto 25 percent of the total labour force.

4) \textbf{Poverty Line}: - Street food vending has been known to generate income a few times above those of poverty line in many developing countries, particularly in countries like the Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia. For instance, a Thailand family involved in the street foods trade are able to earn an average of 5,700 baht per month while a vendor in the Iloilo city of the

\textsuperscript{22} Jhabvala, R., “Roles and Perceptions”, \textit{Street Vendors}, (Seminar), 7 June, 2002, p.120.

Philippines can earn up to 300 pesos daily, which are higher than the minimum wage received by labourers in these countries. Although the street foods sector is not considered a lucrative sector, it nonetheless provided jobs to millions who are not able to gain jobs in the formal or organized sector. Moreover, street food vending is a relatively easy sector to venture into given the low capital and skills needed for the establishment of such an enterprise.

5. Income to small farmers: - The street foods trade is also vital for the provisions of income to many small farmers who supply these food vendors with local produce, thus stimulating and generating employment in the agricultural sector. Generally, street food vendors / hawkers use fresh, packed and locally sourced ingredients for their foods, thereby providing incomes for local farmers. If street foods vendors are eliminated from the urban markets, it would lead to a severe crisis for small-scale fruit and vegetable farmers as they lose further to large-scale farmers able to offer economy of scale to the more formalized sectors of major retail and distribution net works. Without this vital economic absorber, stability of most developing countries will be further compromised.24

6. Nutrition: - The consumers generally welcome street vended foods as a source of easily accessible, relatively safe, affordable, nutritious and delicious foods, be it snacks, supplements or constituents or full meals. Street-vended

24 Alice Esclante de cruz, op.cit., p.12-23.
foods play a major role in the nutritional intake of urban and peri-urban dweller.\textsuperscript{25}

7. \textbf{Local Culture}: - Another important aspect of street-vended foods is the crucial role it played in the preservation of traditional and local culture, foods and culinary. The preservation of local and traditional cuisine in street foods is especially striking in view of the more standardized fare in other food establishments. Some traditional snacks or foods are only preserved through their ability to appeal to consumer as sold on the streets. As such, street foods can be considered ‘fast food’ with a traditional twist given the great variety that could be procured easily and cheaply. The food sector also works as a traditional ‘transactional sphere’ where cultural and social norms are perpetuated.\textsuperscript{26}

\textit{Government Officials’ Perception on Street Food: Vending and Street Foods}

In some countries in Asia and the Pacific, the street food trade is still not recognized and continues to be treated as an ‘informal sector’. This is despite the economic activity generated by the street food sector and its role in meeting the food, socio-economic and cultural needs of the community. Municipal authorities, police and traffic regulators commonly view street food vendors and the places where vendors congregate to sell their wares as being

\textsuperscript{25} Warren Leon, “To Protecting Health and the Environment” Is Our Food Safe Center for Science in the Public Interest, New York, p.35.

\textsuperscript{26} World Health Organization, “Essential Safety Requirements for Street Vended Foods”, Food safety issues, 1996, p.3.
illegal encroachers on public spaces, contributors to massive congestion problems and threat to the environment and the public health. Hence, street food vendors were regularly harassed, evicted and prosecuted by the relevant authorities.27

1.6 Laws of Food Safety and Street Food Vending

To understand the functions of the regulatory and administrative machinery entrusted with trying to keep food safe, one needs to understand that like most other sectors in India this sector too is governed by a plethora of laws with very different rationales and purposes. The laws have been categorized below in accordance with their relevance to street food vending.

Licensing for Vending Business

The Tamil Nadu Public Health Act 1939 is a State law that requires any catering establishment, hotel, tea shops and mobile canteen to possess a license. The Executive Authority (The Health Officer) of the areas concerned has been given the right to issue licenses if applied for by any catering or eating, drinking establishment. This includes the mobile canteen owner in any place or any place used for the preparation and storage of food or to which the public are admitted for consumption of any food and for its renewal.

In Chennai city, another license is required from the Commissioner of Police, Chennai under the Madras City Police Act, 1888 (henceforth referred to as MCP Act) for an eating house. The duration of the license given is one year after which it must be renewed.

The Police Act states that no enclosed place or building should be used as an eating house or a coffee house without a license obtained from the Commissioner. If such a place is found not to have a license, then the owner(s) are liable to pay a fine not exceeding Rs. 50 for every day on which that place or building was so used.

A further system of license is prescribed under the Central Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954. There are numerous conditions for license specified in the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act. One provision states that itinerant vendors (who have no specified place of business) shall be licensed to conduct business in a particular area, within the jurisdiction of the licensing authority that is appointed by the State Government or by the local authority. One license may be issued by the Licensing Authority for one or more articles or for different establishments or premises in the same local area. When a licensee changes his place of business during the specified period, he shall intimate the fact in writing to the Executive Authority within 30 days of such change and get the license
amended without payment of additional license fee on that account for the residue of the period covered by the license.

There is also another provision relating to itinerant vendors stating that each of them must carry a metal badge on his/her arm showing clearly the license number the nature of article for sale and a few other details like his/her name and address. These two provisions may be applied directly to street food vendors.

There are also separate licenses issued under the Fruit Products Order, Meat Food Products Order, Milk and Milk Product Order and the Edible Oils Packaging Regulating Order. These Orders are issued under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.28

**Conditions for Sale of Food**

The Prevention of Food Adulteration Act prescribes numerous conditions for sale. They include the required sanitary conditions for the utensils, containers and also prohibit the use of utensils and containers which are made of materials which are likely to contaminate the food. Other than various other provisions such as a warranty clause of food quality has been specified which makes the dealers, distributors and manufacturers responsible for any adulteration; and safeguards retailers’ interests have been included as

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conditions for sale. Apart from this, the Tamil Nadu Health Act 1939 does not allow the appointment of child labourers in the sale places.29

Laws Related to Food Processing

The Constitution of India directs the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standards of living and improve public health.

The Consumer Protection Act promises the consumers the Right to Safety and the Right to Consumer Education apart from other rights. The Right to Safety includes the right to safe food, unadulterated and nutritious, served under hygienic condition.

Irradiation is one of the methods of food processing. The minimum and maximum dosages of irradiation are specified along with the food articles for which irradiation are allowed. Also the requirements for the process of irradiation, under the Atomic Energy (Control of Irradiation of Food) Rules, 1991 have been specified with respect to the nature of food which may be in pre packed condition on frozen conditions.

Addition of preservatives, colouring matter, flavouring agents, sequestering or buffering agents, anti-oxidants, emulsifying and stabilizing agents are also methods of processing of food.

Apart from this the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act specifies that any inferior substance, usage of injurious ingredients, infested

items, meat obtained from diseased animals, excessive use of colours or preservatives are prohibited. These are the minimum requirements to be met under this act as specified by the Central Food Products Advisory Committee appointed by the Central Government.30

Laws Related to Food Packaging

These laws deal with the actual packaging itself or with the labeling of the food after it has been packaged.

The material used for packaging of foods is important to look into as, for instance, food will not be very safe for consumption if it is packed in recycled plastic. Therefore, under the Recycled Plastics Manufacture and Usage Rules, 1999 the usage of any bags or containers made of recycled plastics by vendors for carrying, dispensing and packaging foodstuffs is prohibited. Also when one manufactures carry bags or containers made of plastics, those made of virgin plastic must be in their natural shade or white and those made of recycled plastics (for purposes other than storing and packaging foodstuff) must be manufactured using pigments and colorants.

Any packaged food article is supposed to be affixed with a label, on which, the following are to be mentioned; 1) name of the product, 2) trade name and 3) description of food in the package. Also the name and address of the manufacturer or importer or vendor or packer. Other than this the month

and year in which the commodity was manufactured and packed and the MRP should also be mentioned.\textsuperscript{31}

**Punitive Measures in case of Illegal Sale of Food**

**Indian Penal Code**

Sections 269, 270, 271, 273 of the Indian Penal Code have laid down punitive measures for any violation of the law. It provides for anyone doing or acting negligently or malignantly, knowing that it would spread infection of any disease dangerous to life, to be punished with imprisonment for a term, which may extend to six months or with a fine, or both.

If anyone adulterates any article of food or drink making it noxious, intends to sell it or knows that it is likely to be sold as food or drink, he/she will be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term of up to six months, or with fine up to one thousand rupees, or with both. Also, if anyone sells such an article which is noxious on unfit for human consumption, he/she will be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend up to six months, or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees, or with both.

\textit{Powers of the Local Authorities}

Under the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954, a food inspector who is appointed by the Central or State Government by notification

in the Official Gazette will have the power to take samples of any articles of food from

a. any person selling such article.

b. any person who is in the course of conveying, delivering or preparing to deliver such article to purchaser or consignee.

**The Powers of the Food Inspector**

- To send such samples for analysis to the public analyst of the local area within which such sample has be taken and to prohibit the sale of any adulterated food in the interest of public health

- To enter and inspect any place where article of food is manufactured, or stored for sale, or stored for the manufacture of any article of food for sale, or exposed or exhibited for sale, any place where any adulterant is manufactured or kept, and take samples of such articles of food or adulterant for analysis.

- To seize and carry away or keep in the safe custody of the vendor such article and submit it for analysis to a public analyst.

- To break open the door of any premises where any adulterated article of food may be suspected to be kept for sale.32

The Madras City Police Act, states that, the Commissioner of Police can authorise any Police Officer above the rank of a constable to enter

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and inspect any closed place or building licensed under Section 36 of the Act, at any time when it is open for the reception of people. The Commissioner also has the power to authorise any such officer to enter and inspect any place not licensed, on suspicions of it being used contrary to the provisions of Sections 34 or the Madras City Police Act.

According to the Tamil Nadu Public Health Act, 1939, if any article intended for food appears to the Health Officer or to a person duly authorised by him to be unfit for human consumption or is unwholesome, the utensil or vessel used in manufacturing, preparing or keeping the food article appears to be objectionable or noxious, he may seize or take away or secure such article or utensil or vessel. Furthermore, any article of food so seized can subsequently be destroyed with the consent of the owner or person in whose possession it was found. It can be done in such a manner so as to prevent its being used for human food or exposed for sale. In the case the article is perishable, the consent of the vendor is not necessary.

Thus, there are more than 10 different legislations governing food safety and street food vending in Tamil Nadu. Some of them recognize street food vendors as a part of the society when some other laws do not permit their existence, especially, mobile and semi-mobile vendors. When street food vending is considered illegal, the question of their registration or licensing does not arise. Nearly 74 percent of the vendors in selected cities,
such as Coimbatore, Kanyakumari and Ramnad possess a license for carrying out the vending business; but in Chennai none of the vendors interviewed possessed any license. They however, expressed willingness to register themselves and obtain licenses if the procedure was simple.

The Prevention of Food Adulteration and the Madras City Police Act, place a lot of emphasis on the inspection of food by the concerned authorities, when in reality there is hardly any inspection done. This is also because the street food is not legal and does not exit according to some authorities. A Government officer, however, said that there are regular inspections and surprise raids carried out in Chennai. In the districts covered in the study, municipal authorities and NGOs had conducted inspections and 72 percent of the vendors had been fined for reasons like using the side walk for vending, stall/store extension, garbage dumping and not as a result of the condition of the food sold.33

1.7 Global Economy and Street Food Vendors

Sales of street vended foods are increasing in global level or several other countries and offer stakeholders in the industry in a wide range of economic benefits. With globalization, the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations and subsequent World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreements on Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary Measures (SPS), and Technical

Barriers to Trade (TBT), food quality and safety issues have become significant in the context of food security, public health protection and accordingly the need for capacity building in this area, is well acknowledged, not only in developing but also in many developed nations with a view to make then WTO – Compatible.34

The Food Sanitation Law of Japan was established in 1947. Food manufacturers, produces processors and vendors subject to regulation by the Food Sanitation Law are obliged to comply with this law. In 1948, the Japan Food Hygiene Association, comprised of food manufactures, producers, processors and vendors was founded.35

Bogor is a street food connoisseur’s paradise. Although the typical Indonesian diet never strays far from rice, the long time staple diet, street vendors offer not only a remarkable number of variations on basic meal items but also many types of ‘snacks’ both savory and sweet. Around 17,754 enterprises for a population of 2, 50,000 or one vendor for every 14 inhabitants. The figure is based on a total census of the three major and numerous minor markets in the city, two long business strips, the larger schools and major transport transfer points. They sell from fixed own kitchen areas to serve food through a window in their home or from benches in front

of their houses. More elaborate meals are available from vendors who set up
tables under a tent or plastic awning on a vacant lot. Schools are a center of
vendor activity during the day. Women sell fruit, cooked snacks and rice
sweets from the traditionally knotted woven scarf tied over their right shoulder
in a manner to hold the bundle secure on the back.\footnote{Irene Tinker, "Urban Food and Employment in Developing Countries," \textit{Street Foods}, Oxford University Press, New York, USA, 1998, pp.23-24.}

Illoilo (Philippines) has begun to modernize and street food vendors compete with outlets of fast food chain. Corruption within the vendor association brought it down fall. But in Manila, vendor groups mediate between government and vendors to monitor compliance with new, more sympathetic regulation in a major commercial center. Including rural areas within municipalities helps explain the finding of the Food and Nutrition Institute that 12 percent of the food consumed in Philippine urban areas in 1998 was home produced. A census in the commercial areas identified 1,259 street food establishments; slightly less than half of these, or 580, were permanent establishments, while 679 were semi-mobile or ambulant vendors. The total figures for Illoilo city proper, then, were 621 permanent and 729 non-permanent vendors, for a total 1350 vendors, or one vendor for each 41 persons in a population of 55,400. Some 25 percent of the vendors sold in one of the three major markets, and about 7 percent located in interior areas. Majority of the vendors, 68 percent of them, were located in streets and
sidewalks. 18 percent of the population earned income through street food vending. Even then most permanent labour force engaged in selling prepared food was only 12 percent.\textsuperscript{37}

Chonbury is one of many cities in Asia undergoing rapid industrialization and economic growth. Economic change has reinforced the traditional expectation that Thailand women will contribute significantly to family income. As a result, the street food trade is dominated by women. Nearly four-fifths of the 948 vendors in Chonbury were women (78 percent) and were equally divided between Thailand and Sino-Thai ethnicity. The women sold all types of street foods. The ethnic balance did not hold good for men; only one fifth of the male vendors, or 4 percent of all vendors, were in Thailand. Most vendors were between 26 and 50 years old, but there was a difference in average age. While most female vendors were mature women, a majority of them were younger women sellers. Over 200 varieties of street foods were recorded in Chonbury. Most common street foods were of Thailand origin, especially the meats and curries eaten with rice at home, and the vegetables and fish soups. Light meal and snacks draw on Sino-Thai traditions while sweets are primarily based on historic Portuguese recipes.\textsuperscript{38}


In 2001, the population of Bangkok was 8,620,591. Bangkok has 20,243 registered street vendors. Approximately 30 percent of all street vendors sell prepared food and they are commonly referred to as street food vendors. Bangkok's socio-economic conditions have made vending an essential part of the city's life. The problems that are recognized as accompanying the activities of vendors are as much political as legal, and are rooted in the nation's social and political circumstances. The problems commonly associated with street vending relate to cleanliness of the city environs, and to the orderliness of the city's activities. The socio-economic importance of street food business in Bangkok is readily demonstrated by the fact that they provide so much employment and return and income to owner-operators, double that of restaurant employees.39

Many of the characteristics of the street food trade in Manikganj reflect the poverty of the local population, as well as the cultural influence of Islam, most notably in the almost total absence of women vendors. Compared to most other cities except for Ziguichor, demand for street food is relatively limited, as is the variety of products offered. In Bangladesh, street food vendors have received little attention or assistance in the past, largely because most such agencies have in the past focused on the rural poor. EPOC's emphasis on the need of the urban and peri-urban poor has encouraged more

urban programs; EPOC’s partner in the credit project has concentrated more recently on assisting women and men who produce street foods.\textsuperscript{40}

The street food vendors in the country of Mauritius showed that they were quite aware of the appropriate hygienic conditions required for handling and preparing foods. However, it was found that the majority of vendors did not put their knowledge into practice, as they perceived that their products were of relatively low risk to consumer. For over half of the vendor’s households, the main income was derived from street food vending.\textsuperscript{41}

India, Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Egypt, Nigeria, Senegal, America, Australia and New Zealand are familiar with making, selling and eating of food on streets. The accumulated power of the street food project findings bring new insight into the nature of micro enterprises; the interventions that really help to improve income and food safety, and the gender aspects of the street food trade. Challenging conventional wisdom about the informal sector and assumptions in development theory about women and aid policies for poor small-scale entrepreneurs in developing countries.\textsuperscript{42}

1.8 Street Food Vendors in India

Realizing the socio-economic and nutritional significance of

\textsuperscript{40} Irene Tinker, op.cit., p.75.
\textsuperscript{42} Lella Salaverria and Tina Santos, “Caloocan Vending Program – Makati City Clears its Side Walks”, Philippines, Daily Inquirer, October 5, 2000, p.306.
street-vended foods as well as their potential for health hazards, it is recommended that national authorities recognize and assist the industry. Moreover, Consumer Organization and civil society groups have a role to play in order to improve the quality, safety and nutritional aspects of street vended foods. Consumers in India need nutritious and safe food at an easily accessible location and at low price.\(^{43}\)

In Calcutta, one can find three distinguishing characteristics in street foods they are

1. Food prepared in small or cottage industries and brought to the street food stall for sale.
2. Food prepared at the home of the vendor and brought to the street stall for sale; and
3. Food prepared at the street food stall itself and sold.\(^{44}\)

In India, the street food trade is still not recognized and continues to be treated as an ‘informal sector’. Municipal authorities, police and traffic regulators commonly view street food vendors and the places where vendors congregate to sell their wares as being illegal encroachers on public spaces, contributors to massive congestion problems and a threat to the

\(^{43}\) Alice Escalante de Cruz, “The Street Food Sector in Asia and the Pacific” Consumers and Food Security, June 2002, pp.2-3

\(^{44}\) Shashi Sareen, “Food Safety in Food Security and Food Trade – Case Study India Responds to International Food Safety Requirements”, International Food Policy Research Institute, September 2003, pp.10-11.
environment and public health. Hence, street food vendors were regularly harassed, evicted and prosecuted by the relevant authorities.  

Public health problems are those associated with the food hygiene and sanitation that are closely related to improper personal hygiene, in sanitary handling practices and habits. Since 1996, the all India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health in Calcutta have been collaborating with the Calcutta Municipal Corporation, the Calcutta Police, four vendors’ unions and several consumers organizations to prepare a draft for a city action plan for the improvement of the street foods sector. Proposals have been made to develop a “Model of Street Food Corner” where vendors are required to be licensed and trained. Bangalore has also embarked on a similar programmes for its street food venders in recent times. 

National Policy for Urban Street Vendors

Street vending as a profession has been in existence in India since time immemorial. However, their number has increased manifold in the recent years. Mumbai has the largest number of street vendors numbering around 250,000, while Delhi has around 2,00,000. Calcutta has more than 1,50,000 street vendors and Ahmadabad has around 1,00,000. Women constitute a large number of street vendors in almost every city. The street

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vendors constitute approximately 2 percent of the population of a metropolis. The total number of street vendors in the country is estimated at around one crore under the Supreme Court’s orders, some cities are given guidelines for regulating urban vending activities. However, the provisions made so far do not generally recognize the fact that demand for their wares or services is highly specific and varies as to location and time, manifesting as a natural propensity street vendors to locate in various places at a particular time. National policy aims to ensure that urban street vendors are important segment of urban population, find recognition for their contribution to society and is conceived of as a major initiative of urban poverty alleviation by provision of support to dignified livelihood. The basic objectives of the policy are:

1. To give vendors legal status by amending, enacting repealing and implementing appropriate laws and providing legitimate hawking zones in urban development plans at zonal level.

2. To provide facilities for appropriate use of identified space including the creation of hawking zones in the urban development.

3. To eschew imposing numerical limits on access to public spaces by discretionary licenses and instead moving to nominal fee-based regulation of access, where market forces like price, quality and demand will determine the number of vendors that can be sustained.
4. To make street vendors a special component of the urban development/zoning plans by treating them as an integral and legitimate part of the urban distribution system.

5. To promote organization of street vendors, for example Unions /Co-operatives /Association and other forms of organization, to facilitate their empowerment.47

1.9 Street Food Vendors in Tamil Nadu

Street food vending as a business, provides a means of livelihood to many unemployed especially, in the Tamil Nadu, with the fact that it needs minimum investment. It often involves the entire family in the business from the procurement of raw materials to cooking and serving the consumers. Though street food is popular among the people due to its affordable prices, quick services, and taste, the legal recognition of the business is still obscure. CAG and FEDCOT sought to find out from the street food vendors in Tamil Nadu about their business, why they engage in street food vending as against other employment, where do they sell the food, what are the issues involved in street food vending itself, are they legally acknowledged.48

A large number of people have chosen street food vending as a business as it is an easy way to earn money requiring less investment and skill; 73 percentage in Chennai and 57 percentage in other districts. People in jobs such as marketing and a large number of people who migrated from villages to cities (27 percent in Chennai) in search of jobs depend on street food vendors for their every day meals. The vendors in Chennai had neither registered themselves nor possessed a licence, thereby, the business has not been properly recognized. In the other districts however few vendors are having some kinds of business permits issued by the municipality for stationary vendors. In Chennai, the vendors were hesitant to accept that they were harassed by the police. Eviction of vendors in Chennai has been for reasons that range from pavement encroachment to extension of roads and political rallies. In the case of vendors in the beach, eviction has been for reasons of cyclone warnings being issued and when political meetings have been arranged. In the other districts during the VIPs' visits and police parades.49

The law provides for regular inspection of street food vendors for the quality of food served and in case of default, the vendor could be punished with a fine. Hardly have there been instances of such food inspections in the Chennai (60 percent vendors in Chennai and 85 percent in other districts have not been inspected). The few instances of inspection have

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been merely casual inspections. As far as the punishment in the form of fines, vendors have been fined not for the quality of food they serve but for the vending unit being an encroachment on the road, improper garbage disposal or stall extension. In Tamil Nadu most of the vendors believed that no special skill was required to cook and serve food and therefore they did not believe that they need any training on food safety and food handling.\(^{50}\)

Street vendors being a part of the unorganized sector have little or no access to credit from the formal sector financial institutions particularly for their economic activities without which they will have to depend on private moneylenders for borrowing at higher interest rates. NABARD has already started refinancing banks in rural areas for lending of loan to Self-Help Groups (SHGs) for their income generation activities like wise, banks should be encouraged to extend credit to SHGs of vendors. The vendor's associations should be assisted by NGO's under SJSRY scheme for organizing SHGs, Networking and federating the SHGs to create a financial interface between the vendors and formal sector financial institutions to gain access to larger credit not only for income generation but also for housing whenever the need arises.\(^{51}\)

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1.10 Street Food Vendors in Madurai – Study Area

Street foods vending plays a crucial role in Madurai vending system. Efforts were made in the recent past, to get due recognition for street food vending and a city wide campaign and lobby to generate public support had been initiated. Among various items sold on the street, food items constitute a major share. Street food vending has not only served the food needs of the public in an affordable way but also serves as livelihood of many urban poor women. It is apparent that lower and middle income households are in urban setting depend on street foods.

With the aim to improve the welfare of the street food vendors, and to make street food safe for the consumers, FEDCOT had initiated measures for integration of the street food vendors as an association and helping them to work together and to get their legitimate recognition and protection. The proposed objectives are as follows:

1. To promote a street vendors association in Madurai and to facilitate a process of registration with the government or Municipal corporation.

2. To provide training on food safety, hygiene practices and on best practices in handling food to registered street vendors.

3. To enable the street vendors to understand that it is important to provide quality service to the consumer through counseling.
Madurai Street Food Vendors Association (MSFVA) has started the process of forming the association. It was rather difficult for the volunteers as it was a new experience. But, with the help of few motivated street food vendors, the volunteers were able to reach the vendors personally and convinced them on the importance of such association.52

To educate the street food vendors, capacity building training programmes were organized in Madurai city. The vendors were educated on the basics of food safety, hygienic practices, food security, and health consciousness, importance of potable water and personal cleanliness. In Madurai, street vendors do not get opportunities to work continuously for a month, especially during rainy days they are forced to remain unemployed continuously for long days. In the case of street vending, the working hours are not fixed as in the case of other established business. Normally the workers have to work for a long duration depending upon the product, which are sold.

Working capital is a must for smooth transaction. In the street vending business also the vendors need capital to run the day-do-day business. The street vendor’s gross sale of the product not only determines the profit but it is the main source of income for street vendors.

The street food vendors need to go a long way in achieving the quality street food. More and more food handling trainings are essential to strengthen the quality of the street food. Then only consumers will get quality and hygiene street foods.\textsuperscript{53}

To my humble knowledge, there was no in-depth study made exclusively on the socio-economic conditions of street food vending in the informal sector in India and none on the economic conditions of the street food vending in Madurai District.

**Objectives of the Study**

The focus of the study is on socio-economic dimensions of street food vending and consumers. The specific objectives of the study are as follows.

1. To analyse the street food vendors and consumers of street food and to document the socio-economic conditions of the sample respondents.
2. To investigate economic status of the respondents by analysing factors like income, asset, indebtedness, expenditure pattern and savings.
3. To examine the efficiency of existing policies and regulations for street food vending.
4. To study about local food system, infrastructure facilities, basic training on food handling and safety and consumer education.

\textsuperscript{53} FEDCOT and CAG, *op.cit.*, p.25.
5. To develop practical strategies to enhance the safety of street vended foods, as well as the welfare of street food vendors.

1.11 Organization of Thesis

The study commences with an **Introductory Chapter** with the general explanations of unorganized sector, informal sector, meaning and definition of the street food vending, categories of street food vendors, special characteristics of vending operations, factors contributing to the growth of street vendors, strategies to enhance the safety of street vended foods, credit facilities for street food vendors. Training of food handlers, education of consumers, personal hygiene, Laws on food safety and street food vending, global economy and street food vendors, street food vending in India, Tamil Nadu and Madurai and their problems are presented in the first chapter.

The **Second Chapter** is devoted to the review of related literature.

The **Third Chapter** is concerned with problem formulation and methodological strategies used in the study.

The **Fourth Chapter** analyses the socio-economic profile on the sample beneficiaries. It deals with the age composition, sex, marital status, level of education, nature of housing, ownership of housing, house electrification, availability of water, nature of family, size of family, earner-dependent ratio, nativity, potable water, toilet facilities, pattern of expenditure
and saving, nature and ownership of business, child labour, women in vending operation, working hours and years of experiences.

The **Fifth Chapter** deals with the performance of street food vending. It covers the kinds of vendors, mode of doing business, reason for the economic exploitation of street vendors, location and area of street vending operation, preparation and selling items, packed or loose items, disposal of the waste items, credit borrowing, mode of repayment, rate of interest, overdues, working capital, value of sales, profit and loss structure, rent for vending places, licenses or permit, infrastructure facilities like light, water, cleanliness, food safety, training facilities and hygiene, reasons for the offense, eviction by police and mode of harassment.

The **Sixth Chapter** studies about the consumers and street food vending. This chapter deals with types of consumers, reasons for consuming street food, health problems after consuming of the street food, satisfaction level of consumers, age, sex, marital status, educational level of consumer, time, frequency, place or location to buy the food, reason for interest in buying from women vendors, type of food consumed, food safety, quality and consumer protection, consumer opinion, risks in consuming street food and awareness on street food policies.

The **Last Chapter** states summary of findings suggestions and conclusion of the study.