



Global Forum
on Agricultural
Innovation and Research



A RESEARCH ON THE AFRICAN DIASPORA FOOD MARKET IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Understanding
Market Dynamics,
Opportunities and
Indigenous Food
Systems



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
PROBLEM STATEMENT	7
RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	9
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	11
OVERVIEW OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA FOOD ECOSYSTEM IN THE UK	15
SURVEY FINDINGS	17
MARKET SIZE ESTIMATION AND ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE	23
POLICY RELEVANCE AND STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS	27
KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	35
CONCLUSION	41
ANNEX	43

LIST OF FIGURES

Inclusion of African Food in Household	18
Consumption Frequency of African Food	18
Retail Supply Sources	19
Monthly Expenditure Distribution	19
Key Market Challenges	20
Key African Diaspora Representation in the UK Survey	21
Estimated African Diaspora Food Market Size	23
Frequency of African food consumption	25
Where Respondents Purchase African Food Ingredients	29
African Restaurant Visitation Rate	30
EU African Diaspora Food Market Projections	33

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INTRODUCTION

The African diaspora food market in the United Kingdom represents a growing and increasingly visible segment of the broader multicultural food economy. Driven by demographic expansion, cultural identity, and rising consumer interest in global cuisines, African food products and enterprises are becoming more prominent within the UK's retail, hospitality and food entrepreneurship landscape. This reflects not only changing consumption patterns but also the consolidation of diaspora-led food systems within urban markets.

Across Europe, policy frameworks such as the EU Farm to Fork Strategy under the European Green Deal also emphasise the importance of building sustainable, diverse, and resilient food systems (European Commission, 2020a; 2020b; 2021).

These frameworks promote shorter supply chains, biodiversity protection, healthier diets and greater recognition of culturally diverse food traditions.

Within this context, African diaspora food markets present an important interface between European consumers and African agricultural products, indigenous crops and culinary heritage.

DIASPORA FOOD CULTURE, BUILDING BRIDGES, LINKING TWO WORLDS

African food entrepreneurs in the UK are playing an increasingly important role in shaping inclusive and diverse food economies. Their growing presence aligns with European priorities on migrant entrepreneurship and inclusive economic participation, as outlined in the EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027. Beyond local economic contributions, diaspora-led food enterprises act as bridges between Europe and Africa, facilitating trade, knowledge exchange, and cultural connection through food.

This dynamic is further reinforced by global policy frameworks such as the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the UNCTAD Policy Guide on Entrepreneurship for Migrants and Refugees, which recognize migrant entrepreneurship as a driver of inclusive economic growth, innovation and transnational cooperation.

In the agri-food sector specifically, international approaches promoted by the Food and Agriculture Organization highlight the critical role of diaspora entrepreneurs in strengthening value chains, improving market access for producers in countries of origin and supporting sustainable food systems.

These frameworks position African diaspora food entrepreneurs not only as contributors to local economies in the UK but also as key actors in advancing global development objectives, including the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Their activities contribute to more resilient, culturally diverse and interconnected food systems, while reinforcing the economic and social value of migration across regions.

The United Kingdom, which hosts one of the largest African diaspora populations in Europe, has emerged as a significant hub for African food markets, distribution networks, and culinary innovation. According to the Office for National Statistics and the 2021 UK Census, approximately 2.4 million people in England and Wales identified as belonging to the “Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African” ethnic group, representing about 4% of the population. Within this group, around 1.5 million identified as African, including Nigerians (270,768), Somalis (150,993) and Ghanaians (112,58) being the largest groups. These populations play a central role in sustaining demand for African food products and supporting the development of specialised retail and supply chains.

Against this backdrop, the African Diaspora Food Market in the UK research sought to examine how African food systems, entrepreneurs, and cultural food traditions are represented within the UK market and how they may contribute to broader European food system transformation.



PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the growing visibility of African food products and enterprises within the United Kingdom, the African diaspora food market remains insufficiently documented and weakly integrated into formal research and policy discourse. While there is increasing recognition of multicultural food economies across Europe, African food systems in diaspora contexts continue to be treated largely as informal, fragmented or niche, rather than as an important, economically significant market segment.

This lack of systematic evidence presents several challenges. First, there is limited empirical understanding of consumption patterns, expenditure behaviour and sourcing practices within African diaspora communities, despite their role in sustaining consistent demand for a wide range of agricultural products from Africa.

Second, the scale and economic contribution of the African diaspora food market are often underestimated, particularly in relation to its potential as a driver of Europe–Africa agrofood trade and diaspora-led entrepreneurship. Third, existing policy frameworks on sustainable food systems, biodiversity and inclusive economic participation, have not sufficiently engaged with diaspora food markets as strategic spaces for intervention and development.

As a result, there remains a disconnect between the observed growth of African food ecosystems in practice and their recognition within policy, trade and research frameworks. This gap limits the ability of stakeholders, including policymakers, development agencies, and market actors, to design informed strategies that support market development, strengthen supply chains, and promote indigenous African food systems.



RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study therefore responds to the need for a more structured and evidence-based understanding of the African diaspora food market in the United Kingdom. By examining consumption behaviour, market structures, and the broader economic and cultural significance of African food systems, the research seeks to address this gap and provide a foundation for more informed policy engagement and market development.

The research's aim focused on:

- Examining patterns of consumption, purchasing behaviour and sourcing practices within the African diaspora food market in the United Kingdom
- Assessing the structure of the market and the role of diaspora-led food enterprises, retail networks, restaurants and distribution channels in shaping access to African food products
- Identifying key constraints and opportunities affecting the development of the sector, including its economic significance and potential contribution to EU–Africa agrofood trade
- Providing evidence -based insights and a baseline to identify research priorities
- Supporting the development of regional initiatives and potential grant funded projects
- Strengthening sustainable production, processing and consumption of neglected and underutilized species (NUS)
- Identifying market and economic opportunities for UK and Africa



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study draws on a quantitative cross sectional survey to explore how African diaspora consumers in the United Kingdom engage with food in their everyday lives, particularly in relation to consumption habits, purchasing practices, and perceptions of the market. In view of the routine and context dependent nature of food related decisions, the design provides an appropriate basis for capturing current patterns of demand, expenditure and sourcing within the diaspora food economy.

POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The study focused on African diaspora residents living in the United Kingdom, a population marked by cultural diversity and wide geographical spread. Given the absence of a comprehensive sampling frame for this population, a non-probability sampling strategy was adopted. This combined convenience and snowball techniques, with participants reached primarily through diaspora networks and community based groups. Such an approach reflects the networked character of diaspora populations and is commonly used in studies of this nature.

A total of **1,507 valid responses** were obtained, offering a sufficiently broad base for examining consumption behaviour and identifying market tendencies within the diaspora food sector.



DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected through a structured online questionnaire administered via Google Forms. Distribution took place mainly in London and with input from other major UK cities with significant African diaspora populations, including Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and other urban centres.

The questionnaire covered four main areas: demographic characteristics, consumption frequency and behaviour, purchasing patterns and supply sources, and expenditure together with perceptions of quality and availability. Care was taken to ensure that the questions were clear, straightforward, and aligned with the overall aims of the study.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques, particularly frequencies and percentages, in order to examine consumption frequency, expenditure patterns and sourcing behaviour within the diaspora food market. In addition, responses to open ended questions were reviewed and organised into recurring themes. This made it possible to identify common concerns, especially in relation to product quality, accessibility and broader market constraints.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Participation in the survey was voluntary and respondents indicated informed consent before taking part. All responses were treated as confidential and no personally identifiable information was reported. The data were used solely for research purposes in line with standard ethical practice.

LIMITATIONS

The use of non probability sampling means that the findings cannot be generalised to the entire African diaspora population in the United Kingdom. In addition, as with most survey based research, reliance on self reported data may introduce some degree of response bias.

While these limitations are recognised, they were also addressed by the size and geographical spread of the sample, as well as the use of multiple diaspora networks to reach a diverse range of participants. In addition, potential response bias was reduced through anonymous participation, neutral question design and a focus on observable consumption and purchasing behaviour. Even so, the size of the dataset and the consistency of responses provide a reasonable basis for identifying key consumption patterns and broader features of the market.

The research targeted African Diasporas in the United Kingdom, particularly London. We collected 1648 responses but analysed 1507 after cleaning up the data. The survey collected data on:

- Food consumption frequency
- Purchasing behavior
- Supply sources
- Restaurant usage
- Socio-demographic characteristics
- African country of origin
- Duration lived in the UK



OVERVIEW OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA FOOD ECOSYSTEM IN THE UK

The African diaspora food ecosystem in the United Kingdom has developed into a visible and important component of the wider multicultural food economy. It brings together a network of importers, wholesalers, retailers, food service operators and consumers, operating across both formal and informal channels. Sustained by diaspora demand, the ecosystem has grown in scale over time, shaped by demographic change, cultural continuity and a broader interest in global cuisines.

At its core, the system is demand-driven and closely tied to cultural practice. African diaspora households continue to consume traditional foods not as occasional or symbolic choices but as part of everyday life. This has sustained a steady demand for a wide range of products, from staple carbohydrates such as yam, cassava derivatives and plantain, to fresh vegetables, spices, condiments and processed goods. Over time, this demand has supported the gradual consolidation of supply arrangements that is extending beyond localised ethnic markets.

The ecosystem is spatially concentrated, although its reach is clearly national. Major urban centres such as London, Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds function as key nodes, with dense clusters of African food retail outlets, open markets and restaurants. In London, areas such as Brixton, Peckham, Deptford and parts of East London, continue to serve as important marketing points, where formal retail spaces sit alongside street-level and more informal trading activities. Beyond these centres, smaller retail networks operate across other UK cities, ensuring wider access to African food products.

Supply chains tend to follow a hybrid structure, combining formal import systems with more fragmented and at times, informal distribution channels. Products reach the UK through a mix of large importers, specialised distributors and smaller traders, often relying on transnational links between diaspora entrepreneurs and suppliers across Africa. Although this arrangement allows a degree of flexibility, it also brings recurring challenges, particularly around logistics, regulatory compliance, standardisation and scale.

The retail activity is complemented by a growing diaspora-led food service sector, where African restaurants, cafés and independent food vendors play an important role. They not only provide access to prepared meals but also reinforce cultural identity and social interaction within diaspora communities. At the same time, they contribute to the wider visibility of African cuisines, drawing in non-diaspora consumers and gradually extending the market beyond its original base.

Digital channels such as online marketplaces are also becoming more prominent within the ecosystem. Online platforms and specialised retailers have made it easier for consumers to access African food products across the UK, particularly for consumers outside the main urban centres. In doing so, they are beginning to reduce some of the geographic limitations that previously shaped access, while also contributing, albeit unevenly, to the formalisation of parts of the market.

Despite this progress, the ecosystem remains only partially structured and in many respects, under-recognised. A significant share of activity still takes place through small and medium-sized enterprises, many of which face constraints related to finance, logistics and regulatory requirements. In addition, the overall scale and economic significance of the sector are not yet fully captured in official statistics or reflected in mainstream food and trade policy.

Overall, the African diaspora food ecosystem in the United Kingdom can be understood as a dynamic and evolving market system. It functions as a space of everyday consumption and cultural continuity, but also as a site of entrepreneurship and transnational exchange. Its continued development carries implications that extend beyond diaspora communities, particularly in relation to food system diversification, inclusive economic participation, and the strengthening of Europe–Africa agrofood linkages.



SURVEY FINDINGS

The survey of 1,507 respondents provides important insights into consumption behaviour, purchasing patterns and market structure within the African diaspora food market in the United Kingdom. Using **Descriptive Statistical Analysis** Frequency distributions (e.g., consumption rates) and **Behavioural patterns** (e.g., where food is purchased and consumed), the findings confirm that African food systems are deeply embedded in everyday life and supported by consistent demand.

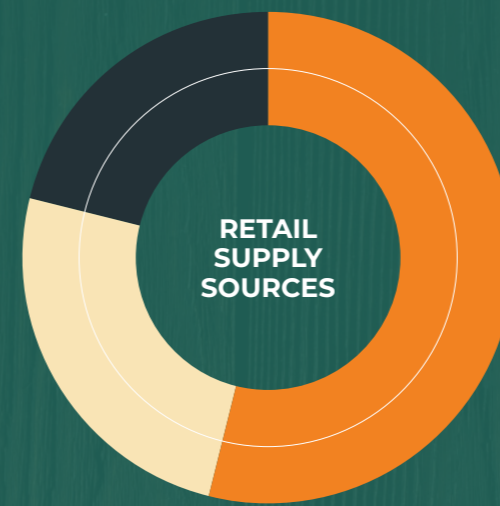
Consumption Patterns: African food consumption is widespread and frequent among diaspora households:

- **97%** of respondents include African food in their regular diet
- **35%** consume African food daily
- **39%** consume African food at least once per week

These results indicate that African food is not consumed occasionally but constitutes a core component of household diets, comparable to staple foods in national consumption patterns. This reinforces the position of African food products as essential goods within the diaspora market.

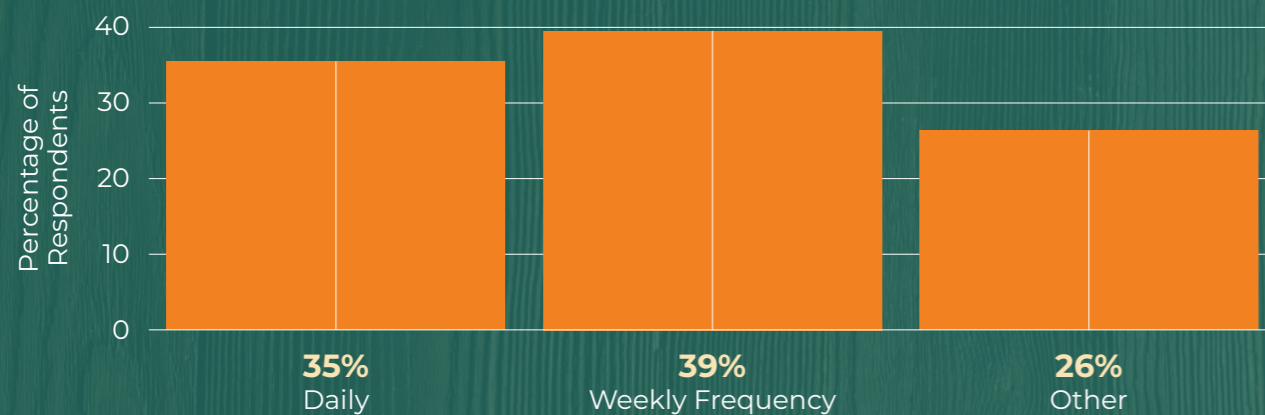


- 97.3% Includes African Food
- 2.7% Does Not Include African Food



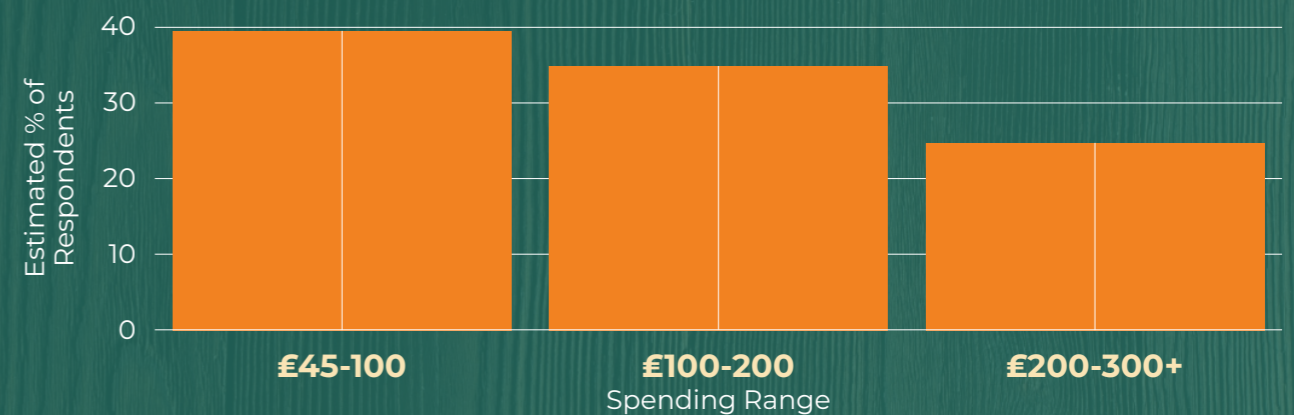
- 54% African Shops
- 25% Direct from Africa
- 21% Importers

CONSUMPTION FREQUENCY OF AFRICAN FOOD



*African food consumption is frequent and embedded in daily life, confirming its role as a staple rather than niche product.

MONTHLY EXPENDITURE DISTRIBUTION



Purchasing Behaviour and Supply Channels: The survey highlights the central role of diaspora-led businesses and transnational sourcing networks:

- The majority of respondents purchase food from African specialty shops and markets
- A significant proportion source products through importers and distributors of African food products
- Some consumers obtain food directly from Africa, reflecting strong transnational linkages

These patterns demonstrate that the market is supported by a hybrid supply system, combining

formal retail channels with informal and semi-formal trade networks. Diaspora entrepreneurs play a critical role in maintaining access to culturally relevant foods.

Market Structure and Accessibility: The findings indicate that access to African food products is:

- Concentrated in major urban centres, particularly London and other large cities
- Increasingly supported by online retail platforms, expanding access beyond traditional geographic clusters

Expenditure Patterns: Survey responses indicate regular and sustained spending on African food products:

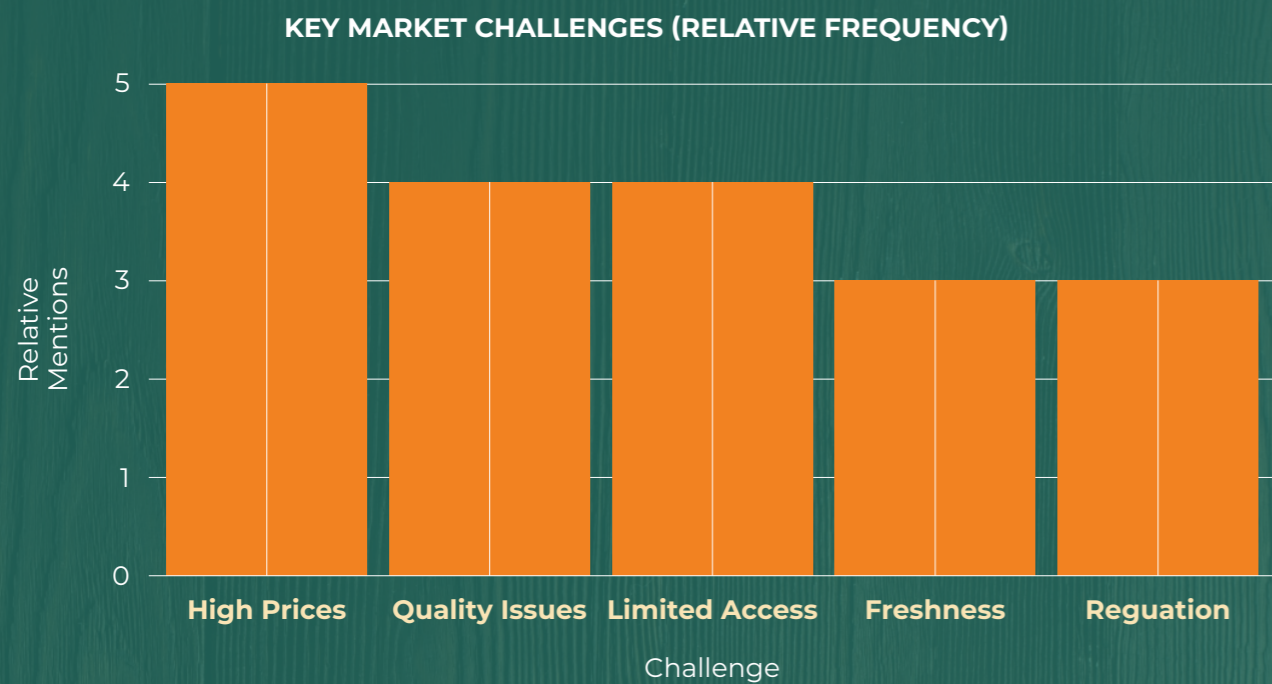
- Monthly expenditure ranges from approximately £45 to over £300 per household
- A working average of £100 per month reflects consistent and recurring demand

This level of expenditure confirms the economic significance and stability of the market, supporting its classification as a dynamic and scalable agrofood sector.

However, respondents also reported key constraints affecting market development, including:

- High prices
- Inconsistent product quality
- Limited availability outside major cities
- Freshness concerns
- Regulatory barriers affecting imports

These challenges highlight the need for improved logistics, supply chain coordination and regulatory support.

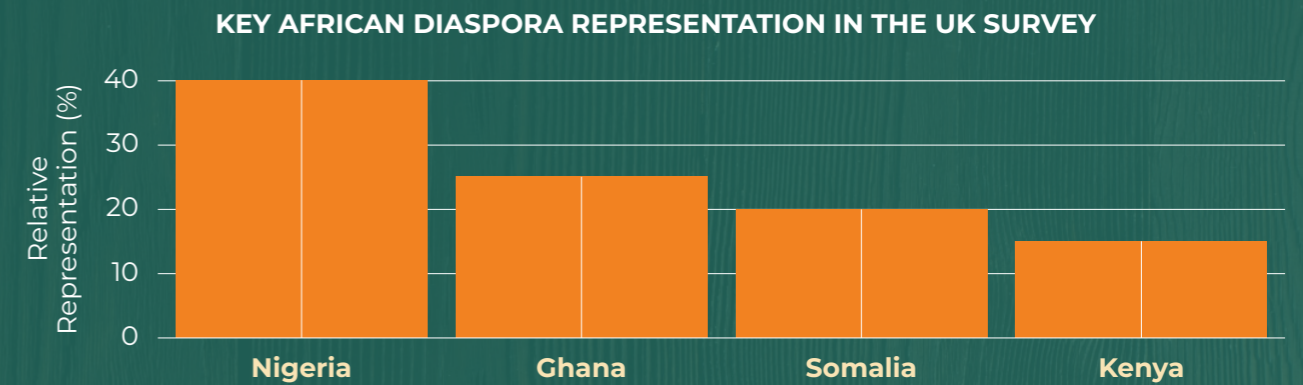


Socio-Demographic Insights: The survey reflects a diverse diaspora population with strong representation from: Nigeria, Ghana, Somalia and Kenya.

The First Three Being The Largest African Diaspora Communities In The UK. This Data Enables Identification Of Regional Consumption Patterns, Demonstrating That The Demand For African Food Spans Multiple African Food Systems And Cultures.

The respondents reported an average duration of residence in the UK of approximately 6.8 years, with many living in the UK for over a decade showing:

- Average duration of residence: 6.8 years
- Median: 6 years
- Range: 1 to 30 years



Overall, the survey findings demonstrate that the African diaspora food market in the United Kingdom is:

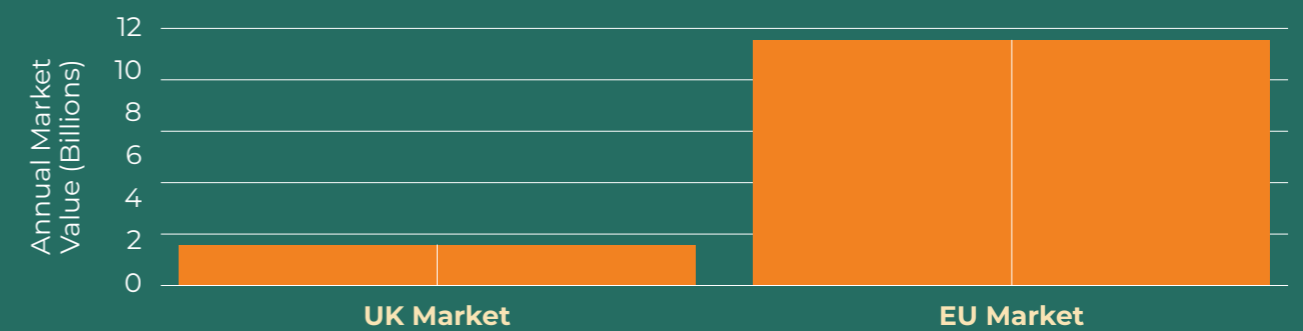
- Demand-driven and consumption-stable
- Supported by diaspora-led enterprises and transnational supply chains
- Characterised by strong cultural and economic significance
- Constrained by structural and regulatory challenges that limit scale

These insights provide a strong empirical basis for policy engagement, market development and investment strategies aimed at strengthening diaspora food systems within the UK and across Europe.



MARKET SIZE ESTIMATION AND ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE

ESTIMATED AFRICAN DIASPORA FOOD MARKET SIZE



UK MARKET SIZE ESTIMATES

The survey findings demonstrate that African food consumption is both widespread and structurally embedded within diaspora households in the United Kingdom. As previously presented:

- 97% of respondents include African food in their regular diet
- 35% report daily consumption
- 39% consume African food at least once per week



These consumption patterns are comparable to those associated with staple foods in national diets. This positions African foods not as niche or occasional products, but as essential goods within diaspora food systems, with important implications for food policy, market inclusion and supply chain development.

UK Market Size Estimation: Using a conservative demand-based extrapolation model, the economic scale of the market can be estimated as follows:

- Population baseline: Approximately 2.5 million people of African descent in the UK
- Active consumer assumption: 50% participation in regular African food consumption (a conservative estimate relative to the 97% dietary inclusion observed in the survey)
- Average monthly expenditure: £100 per household, based on reported spending ranges (£45–£300+)

MARKET SIZE CALCULATION

- Active consumers: 1.25 million individuals
- Monthly expenditure: £125 million
- Annual market value: approximately £1.5 billion

These estimates are conservative and do not fully capture informal trade or non-diaspora consumption, suggesting that the actual market size may be significantly larger.

European Market Potential: Applying a similar methodological approach at the European level indicates substantial growth potential:

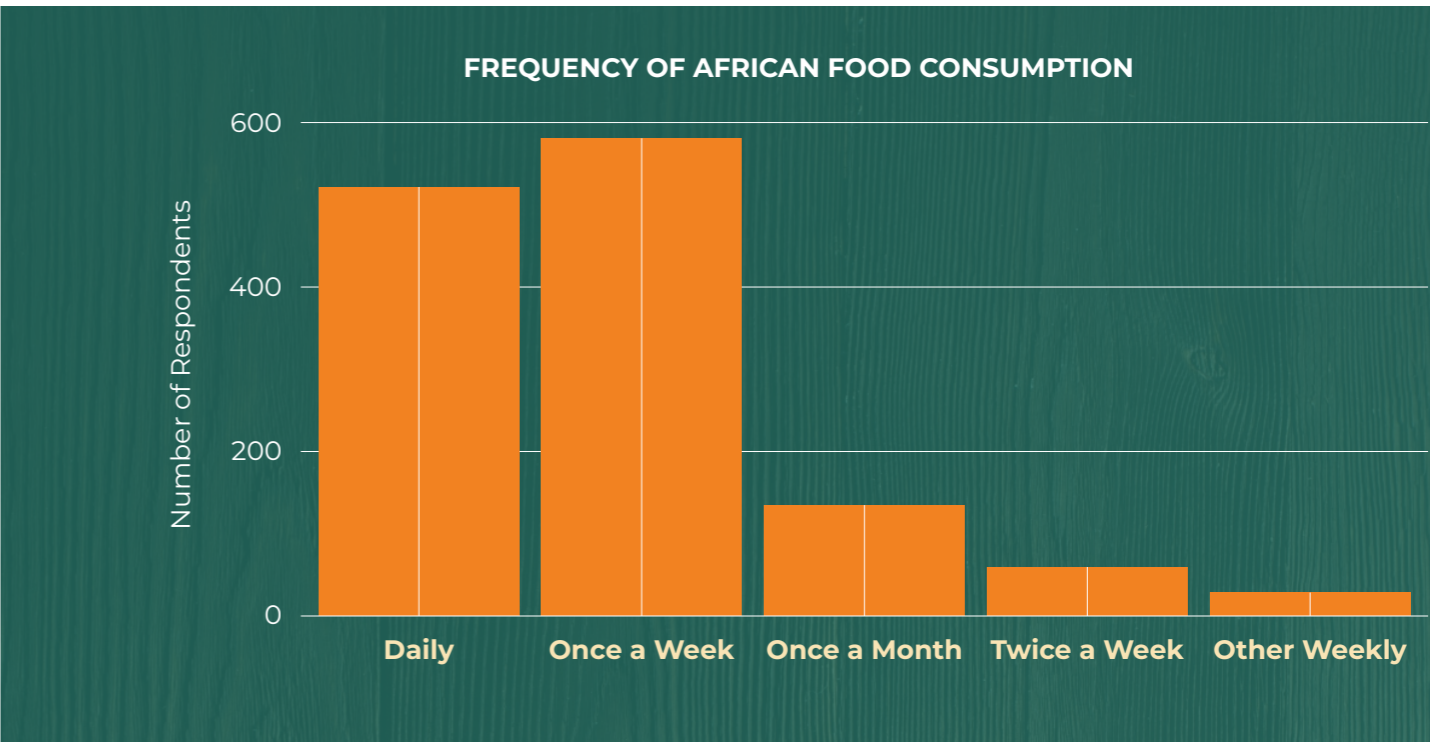
- Estimated population of African descent in the EU: 9.6 million people
- Assumed average monthly expenditure: €100 per consumer

EUROPEAN MARKET SIZE ESTIMATION

This upper-bound estimate illustrates the scale of opportunity and underscores the relevance of African diaspora food markets within the broader European food economy.

- Monthly value: €960 million
- Annual value: approximately €11.5 billion

At the European level, the African diaspora food market can provide direct and scalable linkages between African producers and European consumers, supporting the export of indigenous crops, the development of SMEs and the expansion of diaspora-led trade systems. Generally, the findings also highlight the role of diaspora food markets as dynamic trade corridors, linking African producers with European markets. In doing so, they generate sustained demand for indigenous food products, stimulate value-added agro-processing; contributing to more diversified and resilient food systems across both regions.



This scale of consumption justifies formal recognition of the African diaspora food market as a distinct agrofood sub-sector within European and national policy frameworks. The sector represents a large, under-recognized economic ecosystem with growth potential.

At the European level, the African diaspora food market represents:

- A **multi-billion-euro consumption sector**
- A **strategic demand driver for African agricultural exports**
- A **natural entry point for EU–Africa trade partnerships**

The market provides direct, scalable trade and development linkages for export of indigenous African crops, SME development and Diaspora-led trade systems.

This report provides evidence-based analysis and policy recommendations on the African diaspora food market in the United Kingdom and across the European Union, that can be leveraged to:

- Strengthen Europe–Africa agrofood trade
- Promote indigenous African crops (“forgotten foods”)
- Support SME development and diaspora entrepreneurship
- Advance EU priorities on sustainability, biodiversity, and inclusive growth

It offers strategic implications in Trade and Development, showing how Diaspora food markets function as a dynamic trade corridor linking African producers to consumers in Europe. This market creates demand for indigenous food, traditional food products and value-added agro processing.



POLICY RELEVANCE AND STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

The survey conducted as part of the African Diaspora Food Market research provides important insights into consumption patterns, supply chains and the economic significance of African food within diaspora communities.

With 1,507 respondents, the data demonstrates the strong cultural, economic and market relevance of African food systems within the UK. It also highlights opportunities for aligning this growing market with broader European policy priorities.

The findings from the African Diaspora Food Market research in the UK have broader relevance beyond the ethnic food sector. They intersect with key European priorities related to international trade, biodiversity, sustainable food systems and diaspora entrepreneurship. Strengthening these linkages can help position the African diaspora food market not only as a cultural and commercial space but also as a strategic contributor to EU–Africa partnerships and sustainable food system transformation.

EUROPE–AFRICA AGRICULTURAL TRADE AND MARKET ACCESS

The African diaspora food market in the UK demonstrates the growing demand in Europe for African food products, ingredients, and culinary traditions. This demand creates opportunities for expanding agricultural trade between African producers and European markets.

The Africa–Europe Partnership and initiatives such as the EU–Africa Global Gateway Investment Package emphasize the importance of strengthening sustainable value chains between the two regions. African diaspora food entrepreneurs, importers and retailers are already playing a bridging role by facilitating trade in products such as cassava derivatives, spices, grains, dried fish and indigenous vegetables.

However, the research also highlights structural barriers that limit the growth of these trade flows. These include regulatory challenges, sanitary and phytosanitary requirements, fragmented supply chains, and limited support for small-scale exporters. Addressing these barriers through targeted trade facilitation, technical assistance, and investment could enable African producers—especially smallholder farmers—to access European markets more effectively while responding to diaspora demand.

Recognizing diaspora food markets as **entry points for African agricultural exports**, could therefore strengthen the objectives of Europe–Africa economic cooperation while supporting inclusive trade.

The research confirms that African diaspora consumers in the UK represent a **stable and consistent market for African agricultural products**.

Survey results show that:

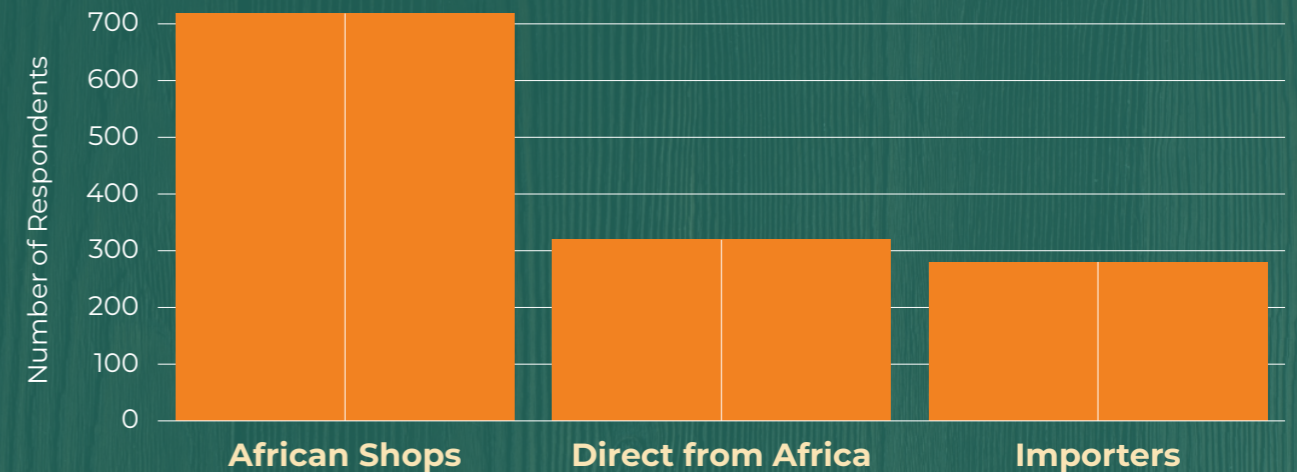
- **1,472 out of 1,507 respondents (about 98%)** reported that African food is included in their household cuisine and diet.
- A large share of respondents consume African food **daily (528 respondents)** or **at least once a week (586 respondents)**.
- Many respondents obtain ingredients through **African specialty shops (731 respondents)**, while others source products **directly from Africa (331 respondents)** or through **importers of African food products (288 respondents)**.

These findings illustrate that diaspora consumers sustain a **regular demand for African agricultural products**, including cassava derivatives, yam, plantain, beans, spices, smoked fish, and traditional condiments.

However, the research also suggests that much of this trade occurs through small-scale importers, informal supply chains, or fragmented distribution networks. Strengthening regulatory support, improving logistics, and facilitating compliance with European food safety standards could help formalize and expand these value chains. This would create greater opportunities for African farmers and food processors to access diaspora markets in Europe, while ensuring quality, traceability, and sustainability.



WHERE RESPONDENTS PURCHASE AFRICAN FOOD INGREDIENTS



BIODIVERSITY, INDIGENOUS CROPS, AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

Many of the products circulating within African diaspora food markets are derived from **indigenous crops and traditional food systems**, which are rich in biodiversity and nutritional value.

The survey responses indicate consistent demand for ingredients such as:

- cassava and cassava products (garri, fufu flour)
- yam and cocoyam
- plantain
- African leafy vegetables
- fermented condiments and traditional spices
- millet and bean-based foods

These foods originate from **diverse agroecological systems across Africa** and often represent crops that are highly resilient to climate stress and rich in nutrients.

This aligns with European policy frameworks such as the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and the EU Farm to Fork Strategy, which promote:

- diversification of food systems
- healthier and plant-based diets
- climate-resilient crops
- sustainable agricultural practices

Diaspora food markets can therefore act as **entry points for introducing underutilized crops into European food systems**, while preserving traditional agricultural biodiversity. In this sense, African diaspora food markets are not only cultural spaces but also **important nodes in global agrobiodiversity conservation and food system diversification**.

Supporting research, certification systems, and value chain development for these crops could help expand their presence in mainstream European markets.

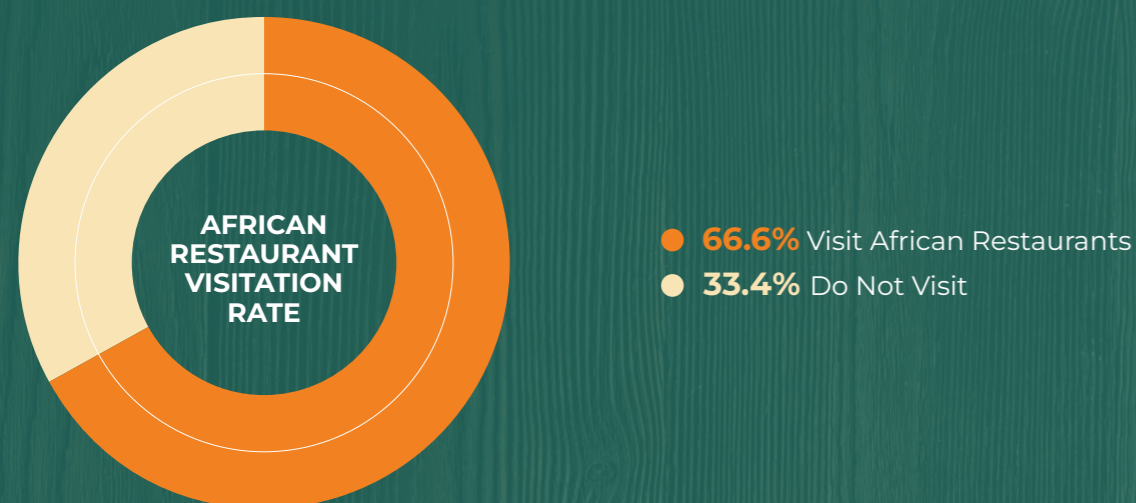
DIASPORA ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

The research also highlights the central role played by **diaspora entrepreneurs in building African food markets in the UK**.

The survey results show that most respondents purchase African ingredients through **specialized African food shops**, demonstrating the importance of diaspora-led businesses in maintaining access to culturally relevant foods.

In addition, over **1,000 respondents reported visiting African restaurants, cafés or food vendors**, indicating a vibrant ecosystem of diaspora-led food enterprises. These businesses perform several key functions:

- importing and distributing African food products
- preserving culinary traditions and cultural identity
- creating employment within diaspora communities
- connecting African producers to European consumers



These roles align with the objectives of the EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027, which promotes migrant entrepreneurship as a driver of economic participation and social inclusion.

At the same time, diaspora entrepreneurs represent an underutilized asset in **EU development cooperation with Africa**. Their transnational networks, cultural knowledge, and commercial experience allow them to act as intermediaries in trade, investment, and knowledge transfer between Europe and African food systems.

Despite their potential, many diaspora food entrepreneurs face structural challenges including:

- limited access to financing
- regulatory barriers related to food imports
- fragmented supply chains
- limited recognition within formal policy frameworks

Targeted support mechanisms, such as diaspora food incubators, trade facilitation programs and partnerships with African producers, could strengthen these businesses and help position them as drivers of inclusive and sustainable EU–Africa food value chains.

Recognizing and supporting this ecosystem can contribute to several strategic objectives:

- strengthening EU–Africa agricultural trade
- promoting indigenous crops and agrobiodiversity
- supporting inclusive diaspora entrepreneurship
- diversifying European food systems and consumer diets

As Europe seeks to build more resilient, sustainable, and culturally inclusive food systems, African diaspora food markets offer a unique opportunity to connect policy, trade, biodiversity and entrepreneurship across continents.

EMERGING MARKET TRENDS

As noted above the African Diaspora Food market in the UK is transitioning from a culturally anchored market space to a **scalable and investable agrofood sector**. These evolving trends highlight not only the changing consumption patterns but also deeper transformations in supply chains, market participation and business models.

Understanding the varied dynamics is essential for policymakers, investors and development actors interested in identifying where **growth is occurring, where value can be unlocked and how this market can be strategically integrated into broader EU–Africa food systems and trade frameworks**.

The research points to four structural transitions that define the future trajectory of the sector:

1. From Niche to Staple Market

African food is no longer occasional or symbolic—it is a **core component of daily diets** (97% consumption). This signals a **mature and stable market**, rather than an emerging one.

2. From Informal to Formal Market Systems

The expansion of online platforms, specialised retail networks, and distribution channels indicates a gradual shift toward **greater formalisation and scalability**.

3. From Diaspora to Mainstream Consumer Base

Growing interest from non-diaspora consumers positions this market for **significant expansion beyond its traditional base**, representing the **largest growth multiplier**.

4. From Fragmented Systems to Investable Value Chains

Current inefficiencies—such as fragmented supply chains, regulatory barriers, and infrastructure gaps—represent clear entry points for investment. This reflects a classic “inefficiency equals opportunity” market dynamic.

Market Growth Scenarios

Based on available data, three growth trajectories can be modelled to guide investment and policy planning:

Conservative Growth (5% annually)

Driven by population growth, inflation, and gradual market formalisation.

Moderate / Accelerated Growth (8–12% annually)

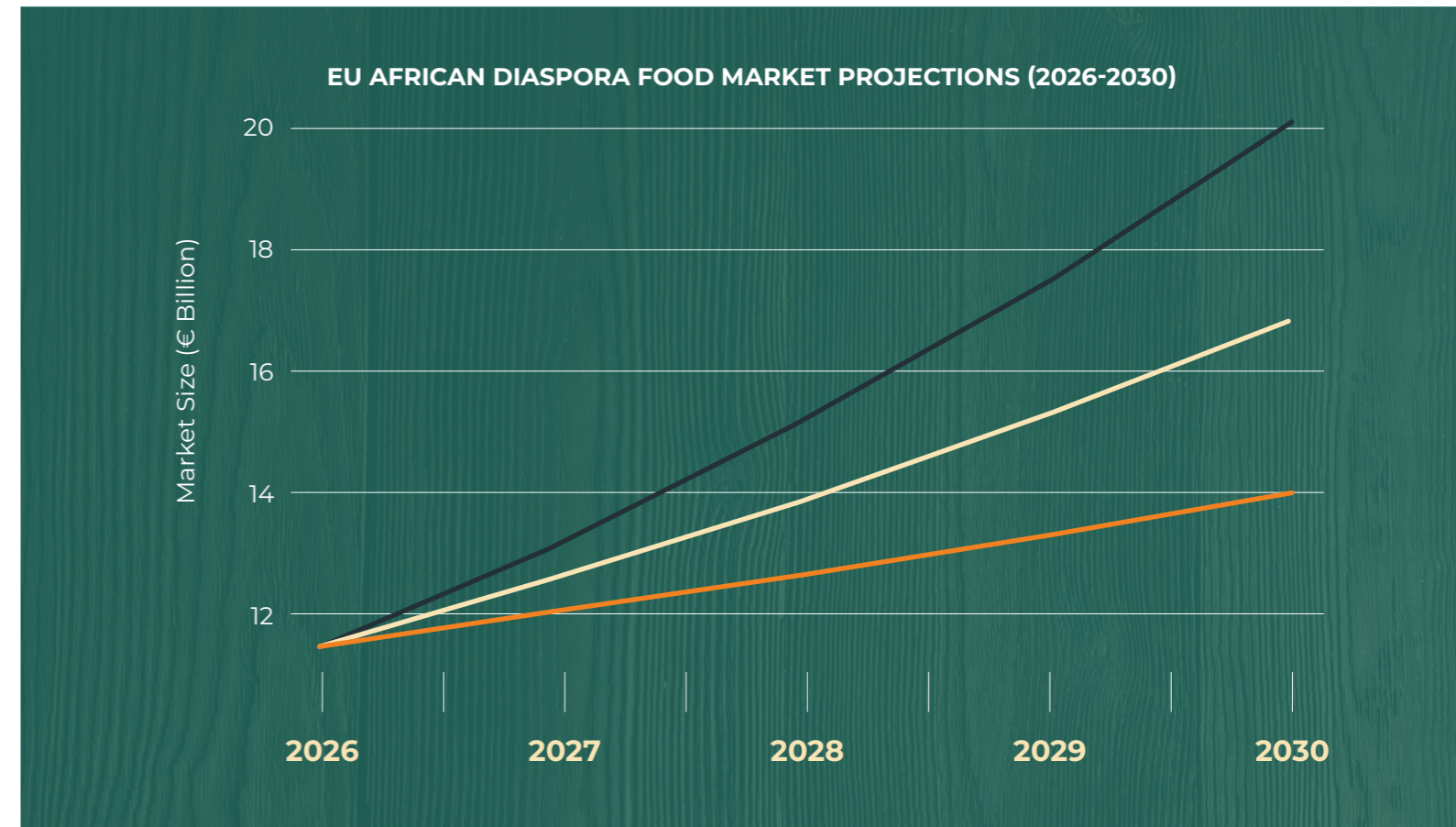
Driven by mainstream consumer adoption, expansion of online retail, and supportive policy environments.

Transformational Growth (15%+ annually)

Driven by targeted investment in value chains, supermarket integration, and the mainstreaming of indigenous African foods.

Projected Market Outlook

Scenario	Annual Growth	5-Year Market Value
Conservative	5%	billion €14.7
Moderate	10%	billion €18.5
High Growth	15%+	billion €23+



Strategic Implication

The African diaspora food market represents a rare combination of proven demand, cultural embeddedness and scalable growth potential. Unlike emerging markets that require demand creation, this sector is already functioning as a stable consumption system with predictable growth dynamics.

With targeted support and investment, it has the potential to evolve into a strategic pillar of Europe–Africa agrofood trade, a driver of indigenous crop valorisation, and a model for inclusive, climate-resilient food systems.



KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the African Diaspora Food Market research and survey responses from 1,507 participants, several policy actions can help strengthen the role of diaspora food markets as drivers of sustainable trade, biodiversity conservation and inclusive entrepreneurship. A central objective is the **valorisation and promotion of African indigenous and forgotten foods**, which remain underrepresented in global food systems despite their cultural, nutritional, and ecological value.

RECOGNIZE AFRICAN DIASPORA FOOD MARKETS AS STRATEGIC TRADE GATEWAYS

African diaspora food markets represent an important **entry point for African agricultural products into European markets**. Policymakers should recognize diaspora-led food enterprises as facilitators of Europe–Africa agricultural trade and integrate them into broader cooperation frameworks such as the Africa–EU Partnership, the FAO Food systems framework, Key UN frameworks (SDGs, UNFSS) and investment initiatives such as the EU Global Gateway and **IFAD’s Diaspora Engagement in Investment (DEI) programme**.

Policy actions could include:

- Supporting **export readiness programs for African smallholder farmers and food processors**
- Strengthening **logistics, cold chain infrastructure and import systems**
- Facilitating **partnerships between diaspora importers and African producers**
- Establishing **trade promotion platforms for African food products in Europe**

Recognizing diaspora markets as **trade gateways** can help formalize existing supply chains and increase market access for African agricultural products.

PROMOTE THE VALORISATION OF AFRICAN INDIGENOUS AND FORGOTTEN FOODS

Many foods consumed within diaspora markets originate from **indigenous African crops and traditional food systems** that have historically received limited attention in international agricultural markets.

Policymakers should support the **valorisation and visibility of African indigenous and forgotten foods**, including traditional leafy vegetables, cassava products, millet, sorghum, fermented condiments, and other culturally significant ingredients.

These can be achieved through:

- Supporting **research and documentation of indigenous African crops and food traditions**
- Promoting **market access and product development for underutilized crops**
- Encouraging **culinary innovation and gastronomy initiatives featuring African heritage foods**
- Supporting initiatives that safeguard food heritage with local, national and international collaborations

These efforts align with UN food systems goals and European sustainability objectives under the EU Farm to Fork Strategy and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, which emphasize dietary diversity, sustainable agriculture and agrobiodiversity conservation.

SUPPORT INDIGENOUS CROPS AS PART OF SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

African indigenous crops offer significant potential for **climate resilience, nutritional diversity and sustainable food systems**. However, many remain marginalized within the global food value chains.

European and international policy frameworks should:

- Encourage **research on climate-resilient indigenous crops**
- Support **sustainable supply chains linking African farmers to diaspora and European markets**
- Facilitate **regulatory pathways for traditional African food products**
- Promote **plant-based and nutrient-rich indigenous foods within European diets**

Diaspora markets already function as **living ecosystems that preserve and circulate these crops**, and they can serve as testing grounds for introducing them into broader European markets.

STRENGTHEN SUPPORT FOR DIASPORA AGROFOOD ENTREPRENEURS

African diaspora entrepreneurs play a central role in maintaining African food supply chains in Europe. They operate food retail stores, restaurants, catering businesses and import distribution networks that sustain diaspora food cultures and create economic opportunities.

However, Asian food retail stores, as well as European import-distribution networks tend to dominate the African diaspora indigenous food market in Europe largely because they built scale, logistics and regulatory expertise earlier, allowing them to operate as multi-ethnic supply hubs rather than single-origin retailers. Their business model also emphasizes product diversification, stocking African ingredients alongside Asian and other global foods, making them preferred one-stop shops for both diaspora and mainstream consumers.

In contrast, African diaspora food networks in Europe are often newer, less capitalized and more constrained by regulatory and financing barriers, limiting their ability to scale distribution, negotiate shipping volumes or formalize supply chains at the same pace. As a result, many rely on partnerships with existing Asian or mainstream distributors or operate through local retail and digital platforms, which can limit margins and growth. At the same time, there is increasing innovation, with younger entrepreneurs developing hybrid business models (e-commerce, branding of indigenous foods, diaspora-to-diaspora trade links) and

tapping into health, sustainability and **“forgotten foods” narratives**, positioning African indigenous products for broader European markets beyond diaspora consumers.

Programmes such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development’s Diaspora Engagement in Investment (IFAD-DEI) can play a catalytic role in strengthening African diaspora food entrepreneurship in Europe. By moving beyond remittances, these initiatives foster targeted ecosystems that connect entrepreneurs with finance and markets across borders.

Such investment programmes can help de-risk and unlock capital by developing blended finance instruments, diaspora bonds, and co-investment platforms tailored to African-owned food

businesses. This support is critical both in Europe and in countries of origin, enabling enterprises to scale processing, enhance branding, and establish compliant import systems. Policies under frameworks such as the EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027 should further reinforce this ecosystem by supporting diaspora agrofood entrepreneurs through:

- Access to **finance and investment mechanisms**
- **Food business incubation and accelerator programs**
- Capacity building on **food standards, certification, and regulatory compliance**
- Innovation hubs focused on **African and multicultural food systems**

Strengthening diaspora entrepreneurship will help scale the visibility and commercial viability of African food products.

INTEGRATE DIASPORA ACTORS INTO EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION WITH AFRICA

Diaspora communities represent important connectors between African producers and European markets. Their cultural knowledge, business networks, and consumer insights make them valuable partners in strengthening sustainable food value chains.

European development cooperation could support this role by:

- Promoting and supporting **triangular partnerships linking SMEs in Africa, African Diaspora Entrepreneurs and European markets**
- Facilitating **diaspora investment in African food enterprises**
- Supporting **knowledge exchange on indigenous food systems and culinary heritage**
- Including diaspora food entrepreneurs in **Europe–Africa food policy dialogues**

Recognizing diaspora communities as **development partners rather than only consumers or remittance senders** can strengthen cooperation between Europe and Africa in building resilient and inclusive food systems.



STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE

The African diaspora food market illustrates how food can serve as a powerful bridge between **culture, trade, biodiversity, and entrepreneurship**. By promoting the valorisation of African indigenous and forgotten foods and supporting the entrepreneurs and supply chains that sustain them, policymakers can contribute to:

- preserving global agrobiodiversity
- expanding sustainable Europe–Africa trade
- strengthening diaspora entrepreneurship
- diversifying European food systems

These actions can help transform African diaspora food markets into strategic platforms for sustainable food innovation and cultural exchange between Africa and Europe.



CONCLUSION

This research has shown that the African diaspora food market in the United Kingdom is a significant and rapidly evolving component of both the national and wider European food economy, rather than a niche or informal sector. Sustained by strong and consistent consumption patterns within diaspora communities and increasingly attracting a broader consumer base, the market represents a stable and growing demand segment. With an estimated value of £1.5 billion annually in the UK, there is a substantial potential for expansion across Europe.

Beyond its economic scale, the sector occupies a strategic position at the intersection of trade, culture and sustainable food systems. It functions as a dynamic bridge between Africa and Europe, facilitating access to indigenous crops, supporting transnational supply chains and preserving culinary heritage. In doing so, it contributes directly to key European and global policy priorities, including food system diversification, biodiversity conservation, healthier dietary patterns and inclusive economic participation.

The findings highlight the need to formally recognise African diaspora food markets as strategic agrofood sub-sectors within European trade, food and development policy frameworks. Such recognition would enable more coherent and targeted policy responses to existing structural constraints, particularly in relation to logistics, regulatory compliance and market access. It will also unlock the sector's potential to strengthen Europe-Africa agricultural partnerships and sustainable value chains.



ANNEX

Furthermore, the African diaspora food ecosystem represents a high-impact opportunity for targeted investment. Strategic support for infrastructure development, certification systems, research on indigenous crops and diaspora-led enterprises, can accelerate market formalisation and scaling. These interventions would contribute to broader policy objectives, including climate resilience, food security and inclusive economic growth.

Among Diaspora communities, the market offers significant opportunities for innovation and expansion across retail, processing, distribution, and food service segments. However, realising this potential will require improved access to finance, strengthened business support mechanisms, and deeper integration into formal supply chains and regulatory systems.

In conclusion, the African diaspora food market in the United Kingdom illustrates that food systems extend beyond consumption to serve as drivers of economic development, cultural connectivity and international collaboration. Recognising and strategically investing in this ecosystem provides a concrete pathway towards building more resilient, diverse and inclusive food systems, with shared benefits for both Europe and Africa.

MOST FREQUENTLY PURCHASED INGREDIENTS (TOP 25)

Rank	Ingredient	Frequency (mentions)	Category
1	Mufo	379	Staple grain/bread
2	Egusi	236	Melon Seeds (<i>Colocynthis citrullus</i> L.) / for soups
3	Garri	209	Cassava staple for fufu& other dishes
4	Iru	195	Locust beans- fermented seasoning
5	Dried fish	191	For soups/stews/sauces
6	Sabaayad	186	Flatbread
7	Xalwo	186	Traditional sweet
8	Ewedu	185	(<i>Corchorus olitorius</i>)/ Indigenous leafy vegetable
9	Semo (semolina)	180	Staple for fufu

Rank	Ingredient	Frequency (mentions)	Category
10	Ogbono	176	(Irvingia gabonensis)/ Seeds for soup thickener
11	Amala	173	Yam flour staple
12	Beans	120	Legume protein with many varieties
13	Camel meat	112	Protein
14	Dates	111	Fruit
15	Bariis Iskukaris	94	Rice dish
16	Canjeero	94	Fermented bread
17	Camel milk	94	Dairy
18	Goat stew	93	Protein dish
19	Sambusa	93	Meat or vegetable filled pastry
20	Somali tea	93	Beverage
21	Baasto	93	Pasta staple
22	Digaag Suqaar	93	Chicken dish
23	Malawax	93	Pancake bread
24	Beef stew	93	Protein dish
25	Anjero	93	Fermented bread

KEY CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

Respondents highlighted:

- High prices
- Inconsistent quality
- Limited availability outside major cities
- Freshness concerns
- Regulatory barriers affecting imports
- Lack of mainstream supermarket integration
- Limited cold-chain infrastructure

RESEARCH PARTNERS

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- Interdisciplinary Historical Food Research Group -FOST, Vrije Universiteit Brussel Belgium
- The University of York St John, United Kingdom

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