



The State of Food Security and Nutrition in Yemen

Summary and Overview

2012 Comprehensive Food Security Survey



World Food Programme

SUMMARY Comprehensive Food Security Survey, Yemen

THE FOOD SECURITY SITUATION

For some years, concern has grown over Yemen's food security situation. WFP's 2009 Comprehensive Food Security Survey report highlighted the deteriorating situation at the time, and warned of the need for "urgent, bold, and immediate interventions to avoid the situation worsening".

But far from an improvement, the last two years have brought a sweeping decline in food security. The number of severely food insecure people has doubled, and today nearly half of all Yemeni people do not have enough to eat. Millions regularly go to bed hungry, having skipped meals and, in far too many cases, having gone the whole day without eating.

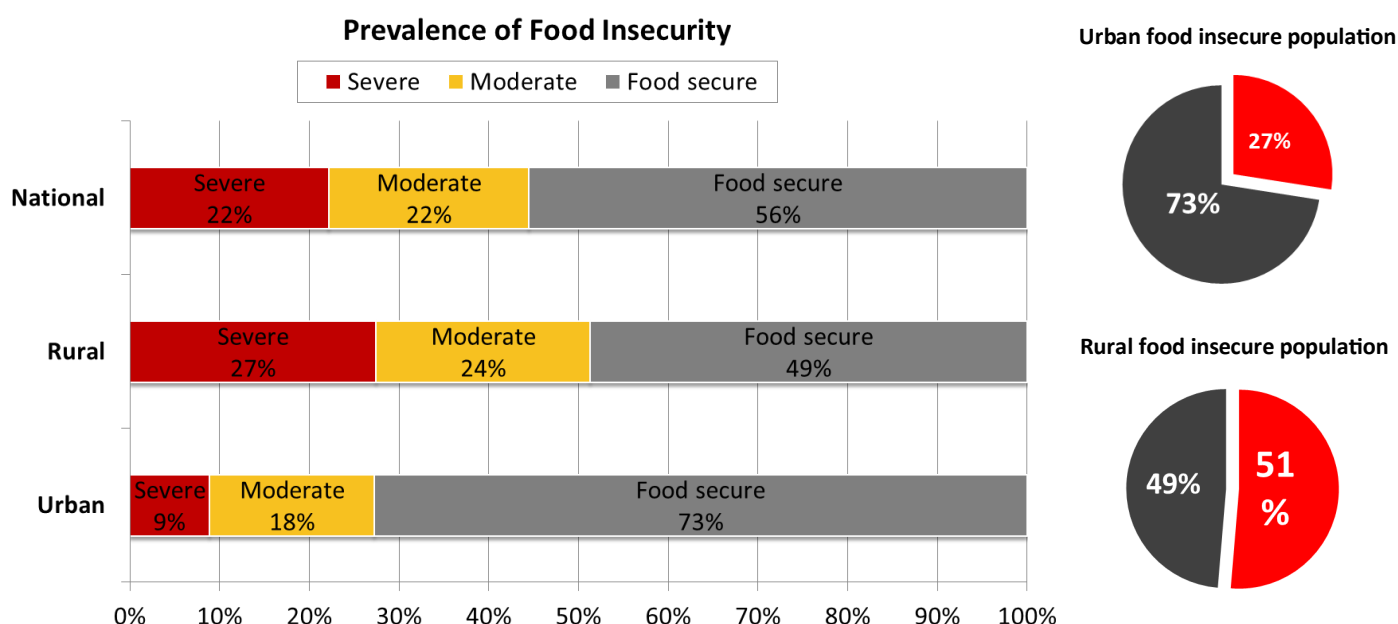
Millions too have resorted to borrowing money as the only way with which to buy food. Children in ever growing numbers are malnourished, because their parents cannot feed them properly.

- **Ten million Yemenis, nearly half of the population, are food insecure**
- **There has been a significant increase in the number of people with poor food consumption**
- **Political instability and insecurity negatively affects people's ability to access food**
- **High food prices affected nine out of ten Yemenis**

NEARLY HALF THE POPULATION IS FOOD INSECURE

Over five million people, - 22 percent of the population - were found to be severely food insecure and unable to produce or buy the food they need. This represents an 87 percent increase from the last CFSS conducted in 2009, and well above the threshold at which external food assistance is normally required. At the same time, an additional five million people were found to be moderately food insecure and at risk of becoming severely food insecure in the face of rising food and fuel prices and conflict. This brings the total food insecure to around 10 million people in Yemen - 44.5% of the population - who had limited or no access to sufficient, nutritious food, and were eating a poor or borderline diet according to agreed international standards.

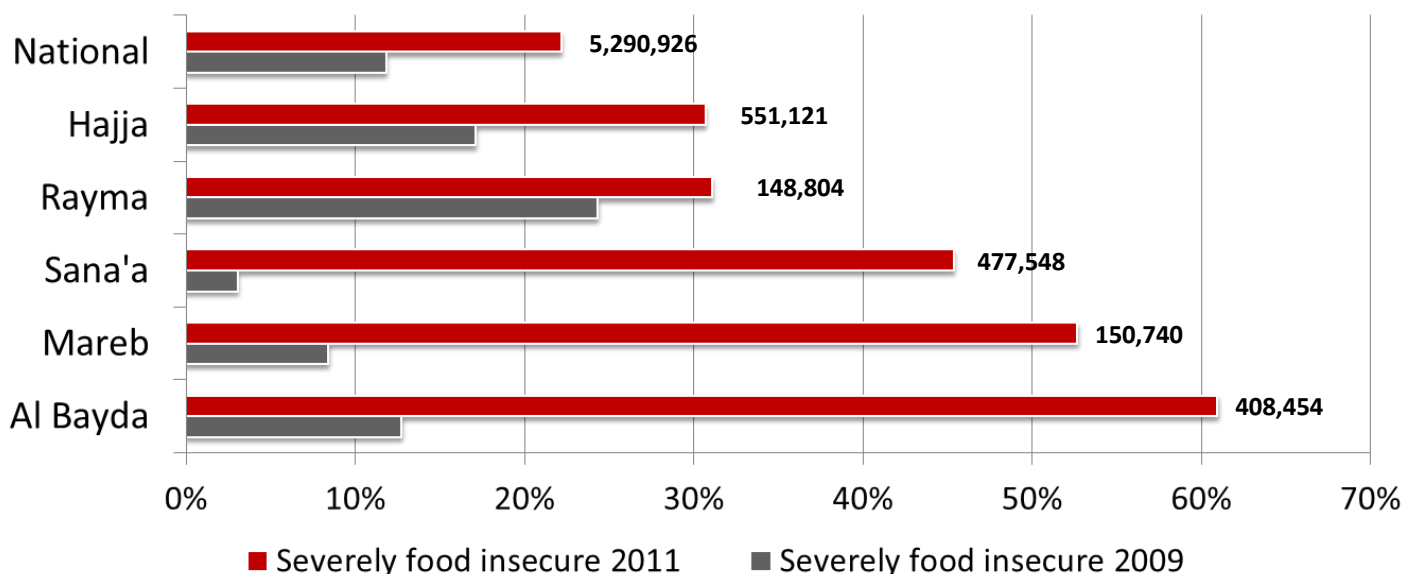
This is a marked increase - of more than 40 percent - over the figure of the 2009 CFSS. There are sharp differences between rural and urban areas, between governorates, and between agro-zones. Just over half the rural population (51 percent) was food-insecure compared to 27 percent in urban areas. There are nearly four times as many severely food-insecure people living in rural areas than in urban places, a marked increase both in absolute and proportional terms over the 2009 figures.



There are also strong variations by governorate, with more than 70 percent of the al Bayda and Mareb populations food insecure, while Hadramout and Al Mahra have less than 20 percent.

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Massive increase in number of severely food insecure in two years

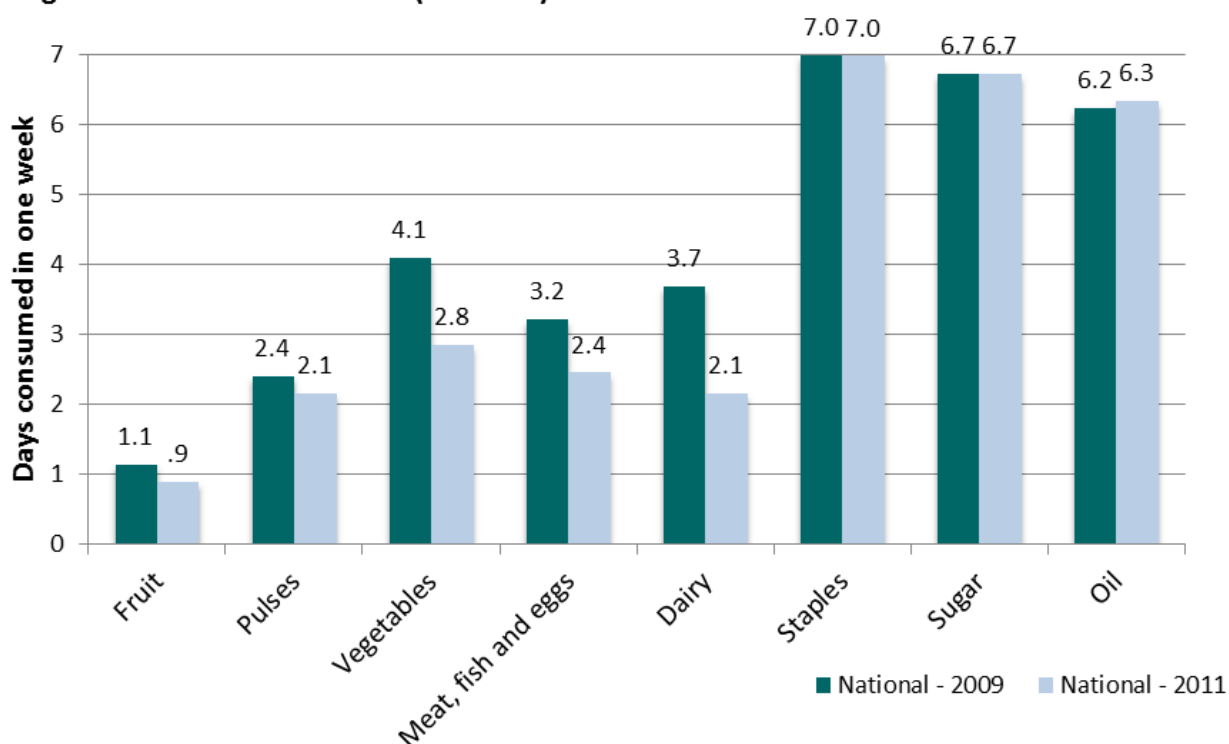


WHAT ARE THE PEOPLE EATING?

Severely food insecure households have poor food consumption and tend to eat cereals daily, sugar six days per week, oil on five days, with very little other food groups consumed. Meat, fish, and eggs, essential sources of protein and vitamins, are rarely eaten.

Moderately food insecure households with borderline food consumption see the introduction of some vegetables, meat, dairy, pulses, and fruit, but at very low levels. A diet of this type is clearly lacking in sufficient nutrition, and people in those households would be expected to suffer from micronutrient deficiencies. There are some significant differences between rural and urban consumption patterns.

Change in diet from 2009 - 2011 (National)

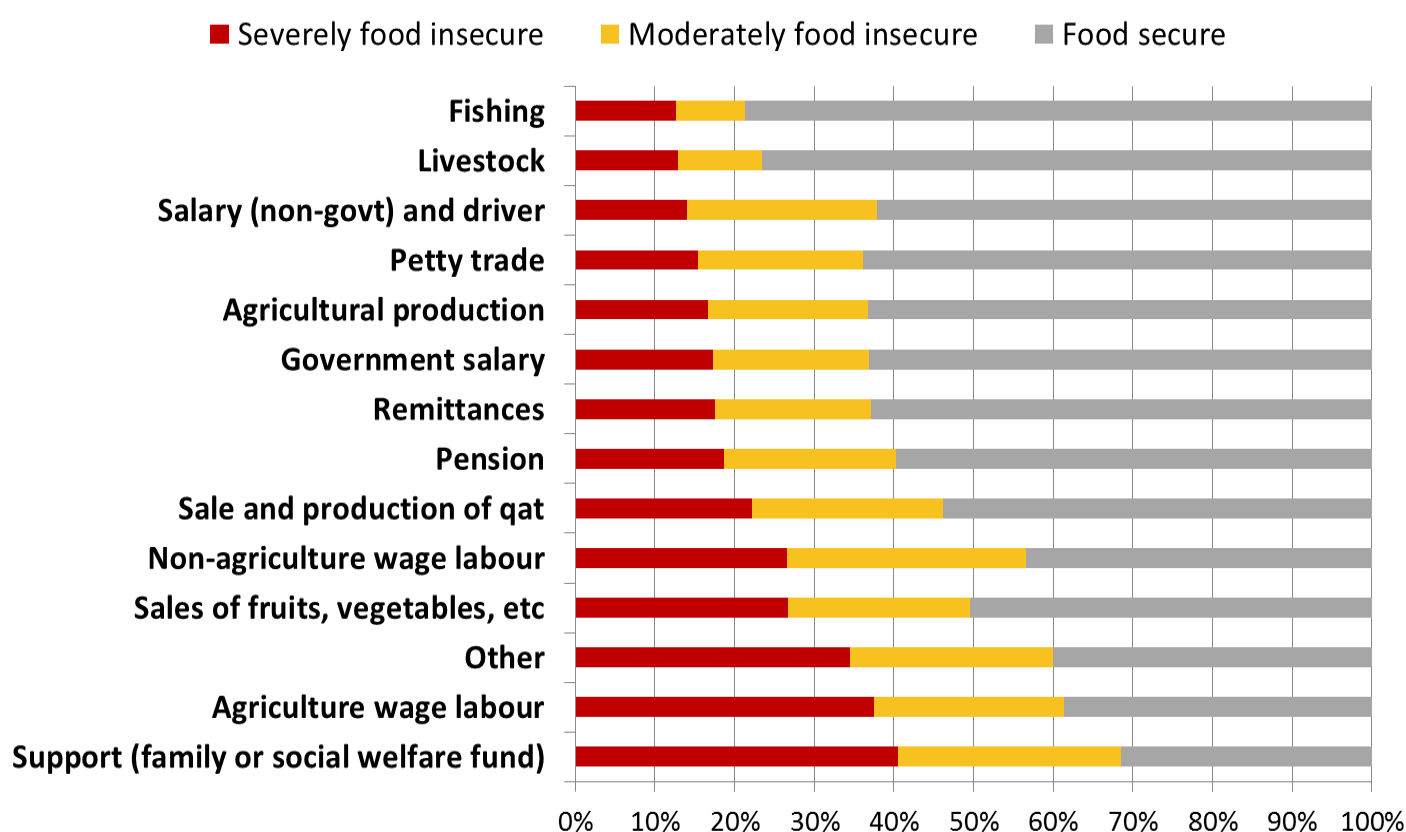


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WHO ARE THE FOOD INSECURE?

- **Smaller households:** Nationally, households have an average of 7.3 people. Larger households were found to be better off in terms of food consumption and wealth. It is mainly due to larger number of adults in the household, who are able to earn income, which may help to explain their relative wealth and food security status.
- **Women-headed households:** Women-headed households make up 5.4 percent of the total sample. The largest proportion of women-headed households was found in Shabwa, Aden, Ad daleh, and Lahei governorates, at between 7 and 9 percent. There is a higher proportion of women-headed households that are food-insecure than male-headed households (52 percent compared to 44 percent).
- **Uneducated households:** Literacy rates vary substantially across all categories, with marked differences observed between rural and urban areas, between governorates, by gender, by wealth status and livelihood clusters, and by food consumption score. Total illiteracy stood at 27.3 percent, with rural and urban figures of 31.9 percent and 16 percent respectively.
- **Families depending on support and agricultural wage labourers:** People receiving external support including those dependent on other family incomes or the social welfare fund, have the highest rates of food insecurity. More than 40 percent of these households are severely food insecure, with another 28 percent moderately food insecure. The food insecurity rate increases further to more than 60 percent in agricultural wage labourers' households.

Food insecurity by livelihoods



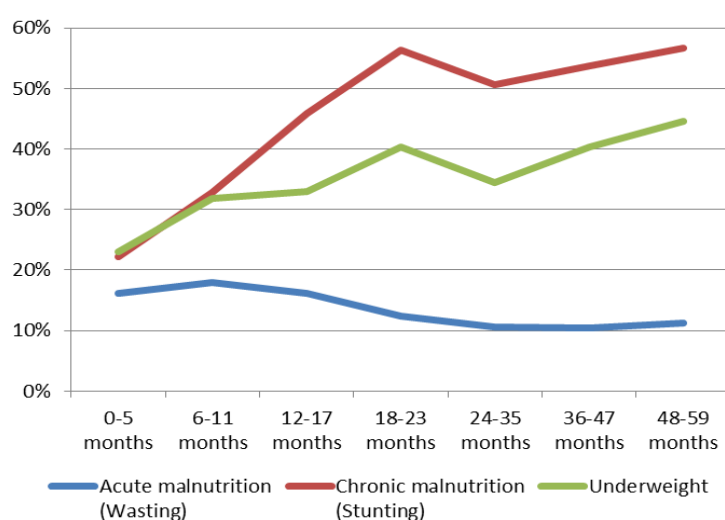
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THE NUTRITION SITUATION

Nearly half of all children under five years old in Yemen are chronically malnourished (47 percent) and 13 percent suffer from acute malnutrition. With rates of chronic malnutrition this high, the physical and mental development of Yemeni children is severely at risk, a disadvantage from which they cannot recover. The situation is further exacerbated by high rates of acute malnutrition. At 13 percent, the situation in Yemen is, by WHO standards, in a serious phase.

Wasting rates in Hudeida at 28 percent are well beyond the WHO critical threshold of 15 percent and further corroborate findings from UNICEF. Children in Hudeida require immediate attention to address the critical situation they currently face.

As well as collecting anthropometric measurements for determining nutrition status, the CFSS interviewed mothers and caretakers of children to obtain information on feeding practices. The CFSS found a shockingly low 40 percent of children below six months were breastfed in the preceding 24 hours. In addition, only 32 percent of children 6-23 months are breastfed and consume at least one other food item. That low figure is of serious concern, as this is a critical age for the development of malnutrition. Some 80 percent of children in Yemen do not consume the minimum dietary diversity recommended by WHO and UNICEF.



- **Yemeni children suffer from high rates of both acute and chronic malnutrition**
- **Hudeidah has alarming acute malnutrition levels amongst children under five**
- **Child feeding practices, including breastfeeding and introducing the right nutritious food are very poor**
- **Low consumption of animal proteins, vitamin A rich food and supplements raises concerns about major micronutrient deficiencies**
- **The nutrition status of mothers is a significant determinant of child nutritional status**

It is recommended that infants receive animal protein daily (or receive iron supplementation) and consume vitamin A daily. In Yemen, only 15 percent of infants consumed vitamin A rich foods and 33 percent consumed meat, fish, or eggs. The situation does not improve for young children (aged between two and five years) where only 11 percent consumed vitamin A rich foods and 33 percent ate animal based proteins.

The CFSS found that undernourished Yemeni mothers had higher rates of children who were malnourished than healthy mothers. Eighteen percent of children born to undernourished mothers suffered from acute malnutrition compared to twelve percent in healthy mothers. Chronic malnutrition was also higher among children with undernourished mothers, with 54% stunted compared to 45%. The largest difference was found in terms of underweight: 46% of children born to undernourished mothers were malnourished compared to 33%.

	Acute malnutrition (Wasting)		Chronic malnutrition (Stunting)		Underweight	
	Global	Severe	Global	Severe	Global	Severe
Urban	13.2%	3.7%	36.3%	14.0%	27.9%	9.6%
Rural	12.9%	3.6%	51.1%	25.0%	38.9%	13.9%
Total	13.0%	3.6%	46.6%	21.7%	35.5%	12.6%

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A COMBINED IMPACT OF SHOCKS

2011 was a hugely unsettling year for Yemen. The country is facing a profound and complex political and economic crisis, which continues to be impacted by social unrest and outbreaks of violence.

The survey asked households to list the three main shocks that they were affected by in the six months prior to the survey. High food and fuel prices were the foremost shock for nine out of ten households. Insecurity and violence affected more than 16 percent of people. Access to food in urban areas was more likely to be influenced by insecurity than in rural areas, with some 27 percent of urban households reporting that insecurity negatively affected their ability to access food.

HOW PEOPLE COPE WITH SHOCKS

Nationally, around 56 percent of households said that they do not have enough food. The figure is significantly greater among rural (59.8 percent) than urban households (45.6 percent).

A staggering 93 percent of Yemenis worry about their food security status. Among agro-ecological zones, communities in the Red Sea and Tihama Coast zone were among the worst affected by insufficient food, with 22.5 percent reporting having gone whole days without eating.

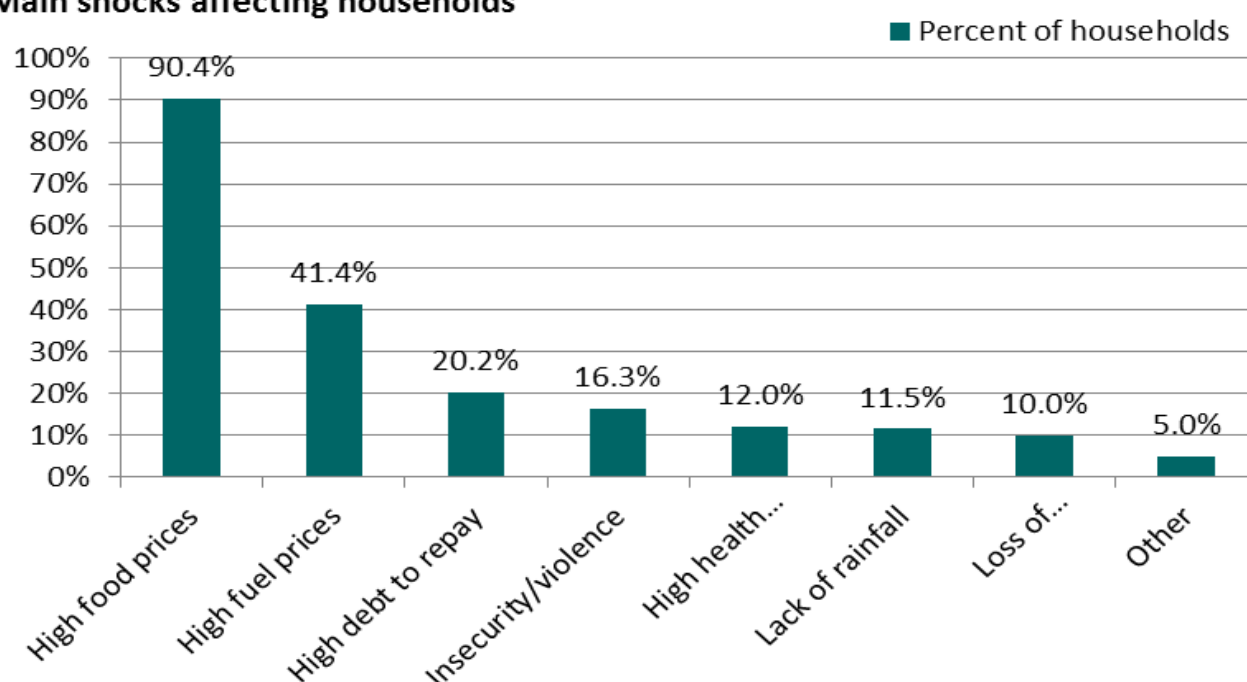
The frequency or severity of coping strategies adopted because of a lack of food had more than doubled. The increase is consistent across governorates and shows extreme deterioration in some cases.

- **Yemen is fully dependent on international markets for its food, remaining highly vulnerable to increasing food prices globally**
- **High food prices are the main shock (90%) affecting people**
- **Supply and demand in food markets are lower than one year ago for nearly half the markets surveyed**
- **Almost one third of households in urban areas report that the security situation has impacted their ability to access food**

The outcome is a serious erosion of purchasing power among the poor that has pushed the basic cost of living beyond the means of many households. Consequently, poor households are now struggling to purchase sufficient quantities of basic food items.

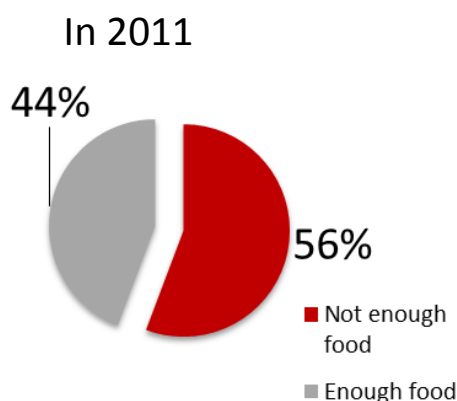
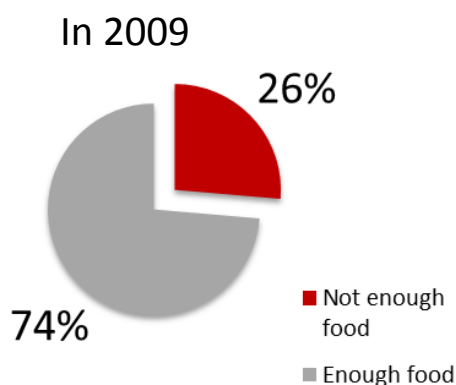
Despite the strong overall availability of food in almost all markets, the erosion of purchasing power has led to a slump in demand for food. Reduced consumer demand has been matched by a reduced level of sales and supply by traders.

Main shocks affecting households



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Households without enough food, or money to buy food

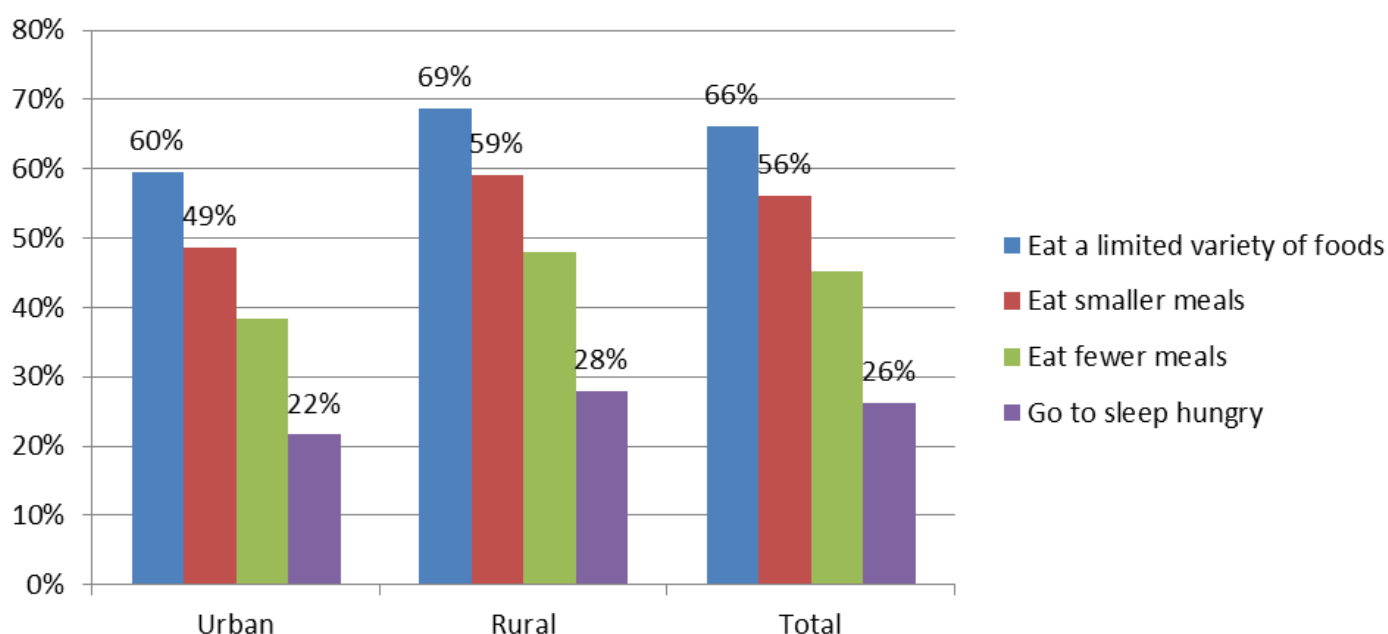


- More than half of the population said they do not have enough food
- Yemenis more than doubled their negative coping strategies between 2009 and 2011
- One quarter of food is now purchased on credit
- Rising use of credit has increased the debt levels of households, hence increasing their vulnerability

An average of one-quarter of all food is now bought on credit. This applies particularly to rural households (28 percent), but there is considerable variance between governorates. In Abyan, Shabwa, and Lahej, for instance, more than 40 percent of food is bought on credit.

The use of credit for purchases signifies the vulnerability of households to the rising costs of living and, most importantly, to the rising cost of food. The 2009 and the 2011 surveys used the same method (a household food consumption module) to determine the amount of food purchased on credit. Nationally, 19 percent of food was purchased on credit in 2009. That figure rose to 25 percent in 2011.

Coping methods, urban and rural



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CONCLUSION

Action required to address immediate needs

Prior to the conflict of 2011, there were existing government social protection mechanisms in place that can be immediately up-scaled and supported by the humanitarian community – through both renewed financial assistance and the provision of technical assistance to ensure the programme efficiently reaches the poorest and most needy households. Such structures include the Social Fund for Development (SFD) and the Social Welfare Fund (SWF) a Public Works Programme focused on cash transfers to the most vulnerable households in the country.

To ensure that the most vulnerable households are reached in a timely manner there are a number of United Nations agencies and non-government partners, including WFP, Oxfam, Save the Children and others already delivering effective and timely assistance despite the challenging context.

Timely and adequate humanitarian intervention is required to support the protection and restoration of livelihoods in areas that are not yet facing crisis conditions. The phenomenon of households sliding into debt to ensure family members are fed, as shown in this report, will result in a poverty trap that will severely inhibit the country's ability to rebound and rebuild if not curbed.

Actions required to address medium term needs

Many broad-based social, economic, and political reforms are required to ensure sustainable food security. The report does not attempt to discuss medium and long term actions required, as the prioritization of such actions must be led by the government of Yemen. However, the report wishes to particularly highlight the urgent need for sustainable household-level food production and water usage.

A medium-term shift towards crops that require less water in their production and towards more efficient use of water is required to ensure that local food production is not jeopardized.

Given the important role that women play in agriculture, it is important that their empowerment as producers is also considered. Their heightened vulnerability, as outlined in this report, should be considered in future planning to address food insecurity.



Actions to achieve sustainable national food security

need to be led by the Government of Yemen. It must include agreement over key development priorities with which to address the challenges. The National Food Security Strategy (NFSS), developed in 2010 provides a solid framework for the government, the humanitarian community, and donors to address hunger in Yemen.

The strategy aspires to reduce food insecurity by one-third over five years through a combination of trade and agricultural policy reform, population growth control, and water policy reform. Since the strategy was designed, the situation has worsened considerably and has elevated needs for immediate food assistance and the plan as a whole remains highly relevant.



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