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Fighting Hunger Worldwide

bulletin

Tajikistan

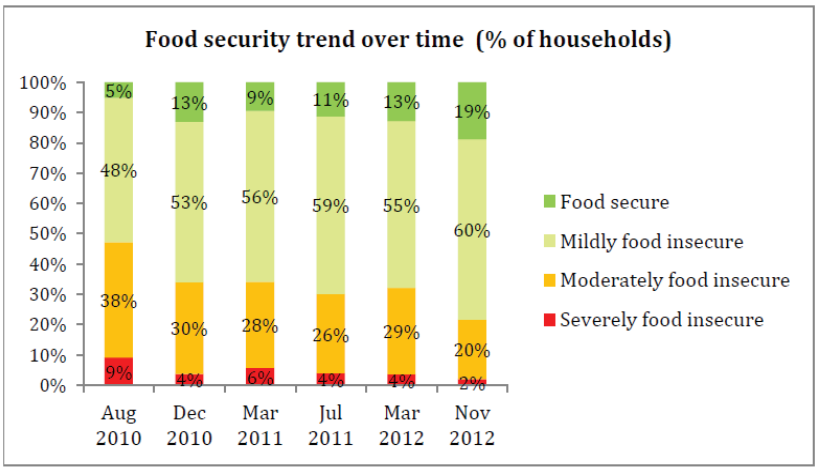
Food Security Monitoring System

The Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS) provides a seasonal snapshot of food insecurity in rural Tajikistan by analyzing data from 1,300 households across 13 livelihood zones. The information for this bulletin was collected in November 2012.

Highlights

- High food prices driven by high import prices due to harvest failures in Kazakhstan and high fuel costs remain the main food security concern. The price of wheat flour increased by 26 percent compared with the fall last year and fuel prices remain as high as in 2011, when they reached the record high levels.

- Despite increasing food prices, the food security situation has generally improved compared to previous years. Impacts have been mitigated through record levels of remittances and a favourable agricultural season in Tajikistan.



- Despite improving trends, food insecurity remains of concern: 22% percent of households remain severely or moderately food insecure[1]. Fifteen percent of households have poor or borderline food consumption and many households continue to use high risk coping strategies to meet their basic needs. The share of food expenditures as a percentage of overall spending remained very high (66%).

- Households that are not benefitting from remittances or engaged in agricultural production face a double burden as they find it increasingly difficult to withstand the impacts of increasing food and fuel prices.

Context

2012 has been characterised by an improvement of the overall macro-economic performance. According to official statistics, the real economic growth was equal to 7.5 percent by the end of the year. In comparison with 2011, the industry and agriculture sectors have both grown by 10.4 percent. The cumulative inflation rate for the year was 6.4 percent, according to the National Bank of Tajikistan (NBT), which was lower than expected.

1. A new food security classification has been used in this edition. The composite indicator is based on food consumption, share food expenditure and coping strategies.

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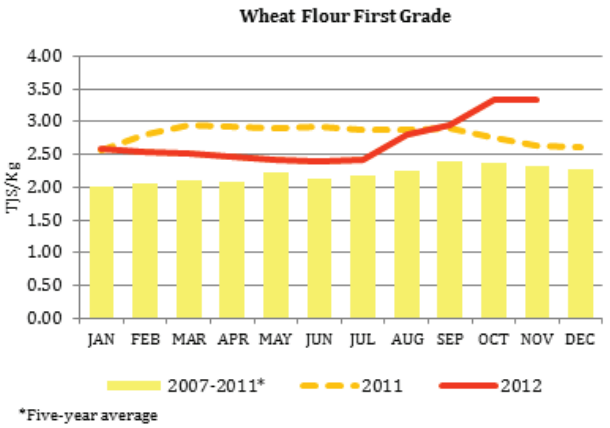
Remittances are the main driver of the domestic economy as they account for almost half of the country's GDP. According to unofficial sources, the inflow of remittances in 2012 peaked at almost 3.3 billion USD, surpassing the 2011 record of 3.0 billion USD. Despite the monetary role that remittances play in mitigating household food insecurity, there is increasing concern about the social and economic costs associated with the increasing reliance on cross-border labour migration.

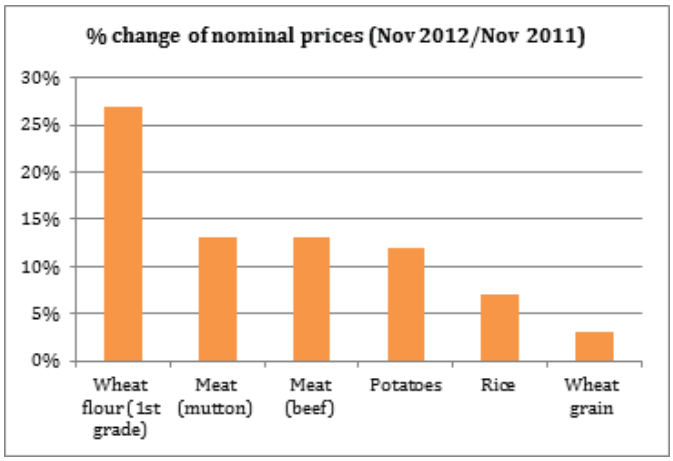
High rainfall in the 2011/2012 winter and spring growing season favoured agricultural cultivation and crop production in the country. According to the State Statistics Agency of the Republic of Tajikistan, the production of cereals was equal to 1,232,567 tons, up by 12.2 percent compared to the previous season (2010/2011).

Wheat and wheat flour prices have increased considerably for the second half of 2012 across five key markets monitored by WFP.

Country-wide, wheat prices increased by 20 percent and first grade wheat flour rose by 36 percent in the last six months of 2012. This was attributed to the increase in export prices for wheat commodities from Kazakhstan, the main exporter of wheat grain and wheat flour to Tajikistan. Prices for locally produced wheat flour were up by 32 percent during this period.



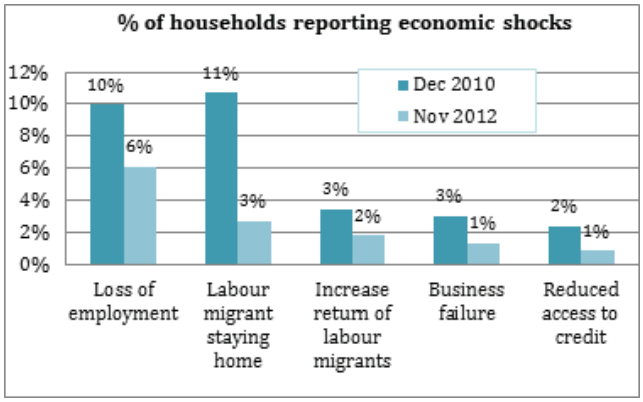
Prices for other staples increased as well. Meat went up by 13 percent and potato by 9 percent in comparison with November 2011.



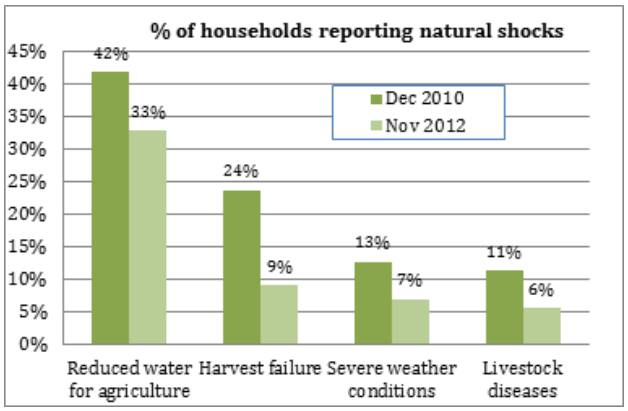
Exposure to economic and natural shocks

High food prices remain the main shock[1] for households in all zones. 87 percent of the respondents reported high food prices as one of their three main shocks. This was followed by high fuel prices, which were reported by 42 percent of households.

On the positive side, households were less exposed to other economic shocks such as loss of employment and reduced labour migration compared to 2010, when the global financial crisis affected Tajikistan.



The scarcity of irrigation water remains among the top concerns for agricultural households. **Thirty-three percent of households reported reduced agricultural water as a main natural shock.**



1. Shocks are defined by an event that has a negative impact on food and nutrition security.

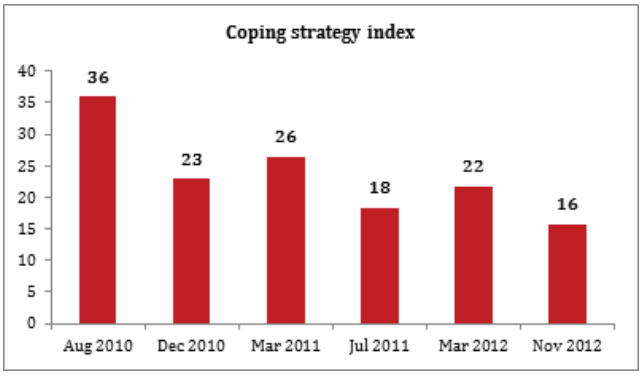
Zone 10, Zone 4 and Zone 6 are among the zones that are most affected by this constraint.

Fewer households reported harvest failures due to severe weather conditions compared to previous years, despite the harsh conditions reported earlier in 2012. However, harvest failure affected around 9 percent of households. Livestock disease was also cited by less number of interviewed families.

Coping strategies

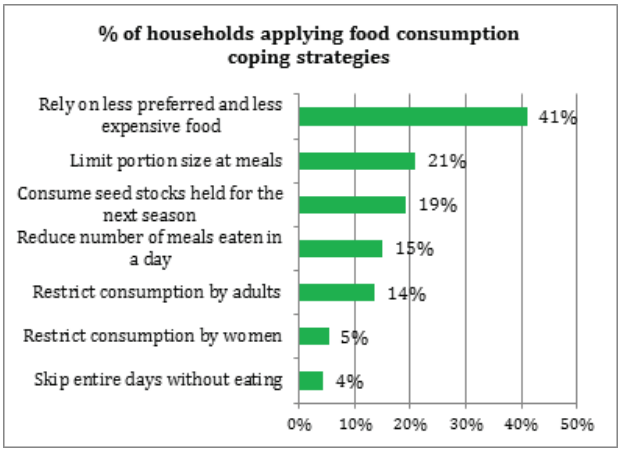
Households use reduced consumption, asset depletion or livelihood diversification strategies to mitigate food availability shortfalls. The frequency and type of coping strategies indicate the level of stress caused by various shocks.

Overall, compared with the same period in 2010 and March 2012, the coping strategy index[1] has improved, meaning that on average households are less stressed than in previous years.



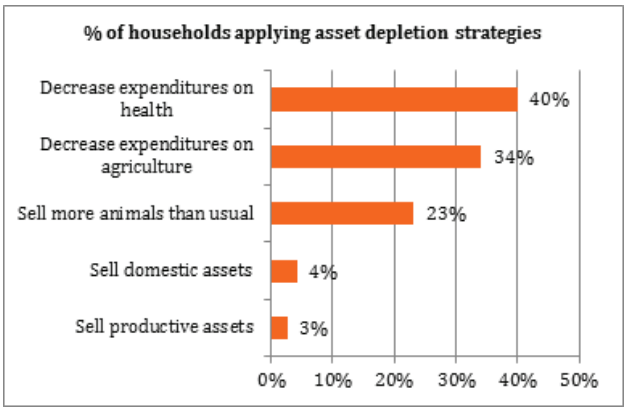
The highest level of stress was reported in Zone 1 (45 percent), Zone 10 (24 percent) and Zone 9 (19 percent).

Most common consumption-based strategies applied are the reliance on less preferred and lower quality food types, limiting portions at meal time, and consumption of seed stocks.

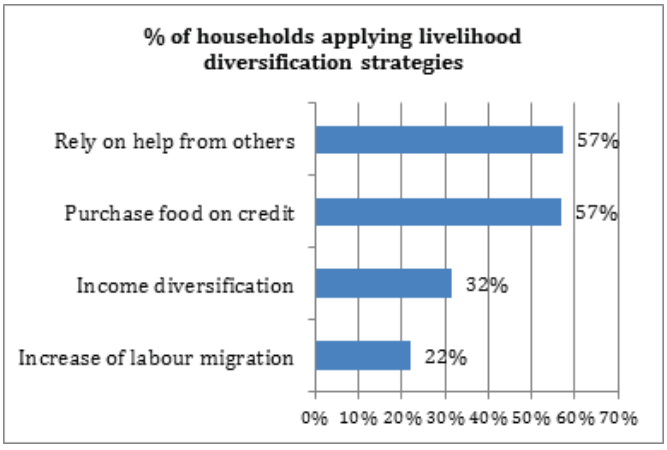


A high proportion of households continue to apply the use of asset depletion strategies such as **decreased expenditure on health care, and reduced investments in agriculture.**

Frequent use of these strategies may create increased health risks for the most vulnerable groups and may have a negative impact on agricultural productivity.



A large proportion of households spread their monetary risk by relying on support from relatives and friends, as well as purchasing food in credit. Both of these actions increase the risk of falling into or remaining in a debt trap.
Households purchase food through credit mostly as a result of low income (including low remittances) and unemployment.



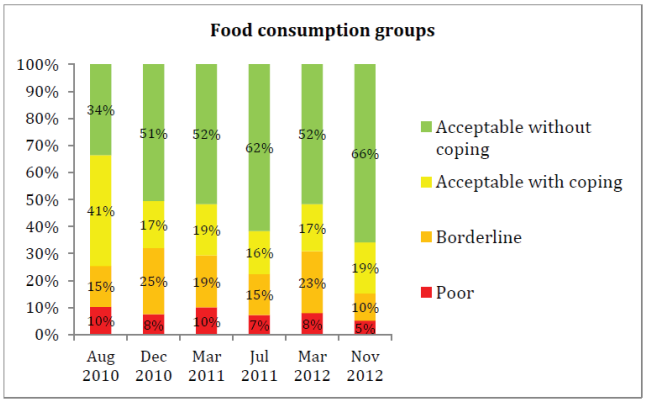
Twenty-two percent of households have indicated that in comparison to previous years they engage in increased labour migration.

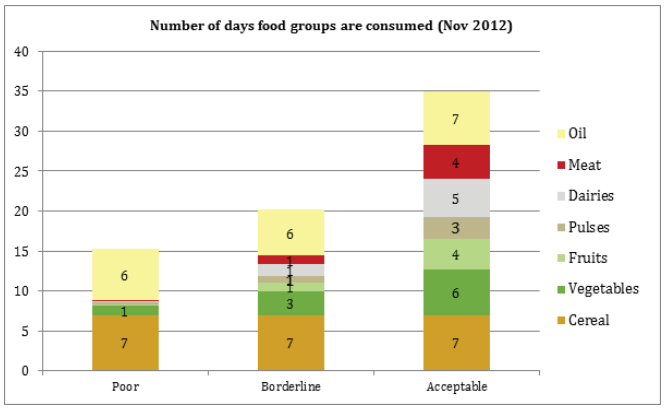
1. The reduced coping strategy index is based on the most common set of coping behaviours across countries, such as reduced number of meals, limit portion size, and reflects the stress level of the household (the higher the score, the higher the stress level).

Food consumption and dietary diversity

During the surveyed season, food consumption and dietary diversity are normally better in large parts of the country as households still benefit from the recent harvest and a wide range of food products such as fruits and vegetables. However, 15 percent of the households have poor or borderline food consumption patterns. Households with poor or borderline food consumption patterns have limited access to protein sources, fruits, and vegetables.
In addition, 19 percent of households with acceptable consumption are at risk because they rely on consumption-based coping strategies. In the event of constricted resources, they will reduce consumption of better quality foods, thus pushing them into the borderline category.

These findings confirm that 'acceptable' food consumption/dietary diversity is largely an access and availability factor (cash and products), rather than households making informed choices about consuming a variety of food groups.





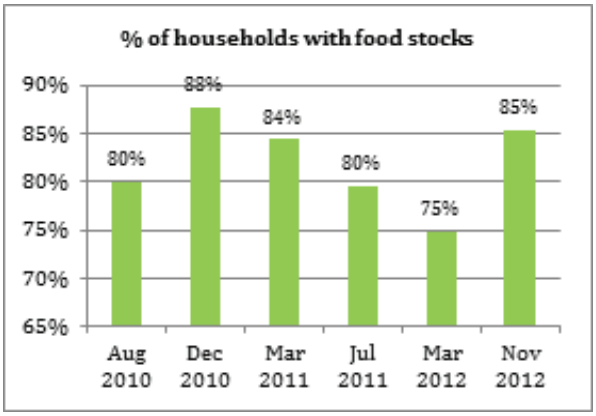
Food sources and food stocks

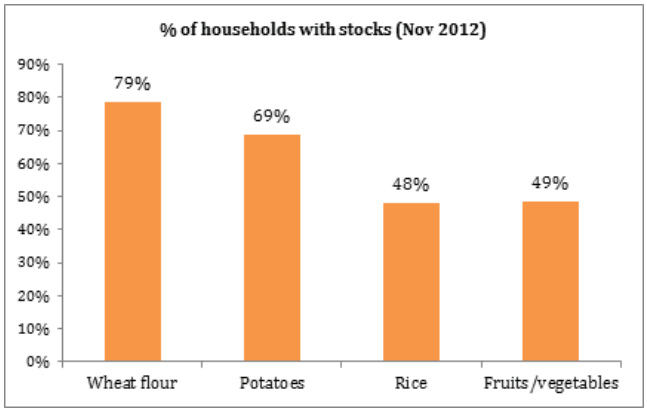
Rural households build their stocks for the winter in fall and food stocks are crucial at this time of the year. High rainfall in the 2011-2012 lean period was favorable for agriculture cultivation. Compared with 2011, better harvests have improved the capacity of households to build sufficient stocks.

Eighty-five percent of households interviewed report that they currently have food stocks in the house.

This is similar to the same period of 2010, when the country had a good harvest.
Potato stocks for households living in production areas seem high, indicating increased production this year.

Wheat stocks can meet household consumption needs for six weeks, more than the last FSMS round in March 2012, and December 2010, when households reported they had stocks for three and five weeks respectively.

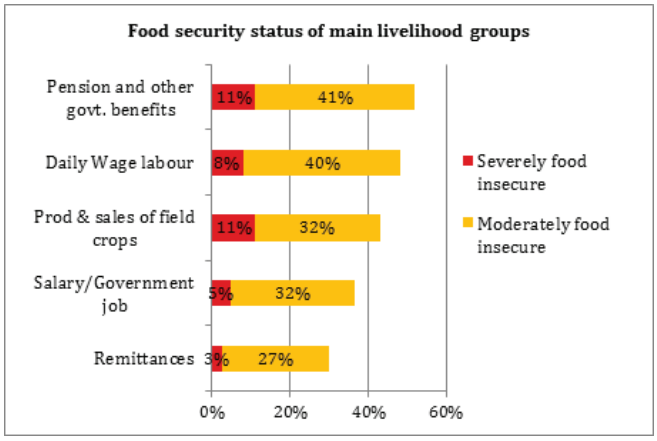




Income and expenditures

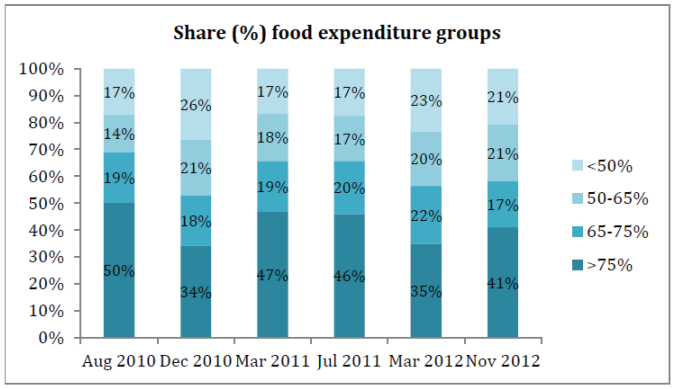
The main income sources remain fairly stable compared with the same seasons in previous years. The number one main income source remains remittances for 27 percent of households, followed by daily wage labour (16 percent), regular salaries (15 percent), agricultural production (13 percent) and pensions (9 percent).

Households relying on pensions and daily wage labour as their main income activity are among the worse-off in terms of food security, while households that rely on salaries and regular remittances are among the better off.



Over the past month households spent 66 percent of their income to satisfy their food needs.

More than 32 percent of food expenditure went to acquire cereals and cereal products. Proportions of food and non-food expenditures remained particularly high in remote mountainous, non-grain producing areas, which are heavily dependent on markets.



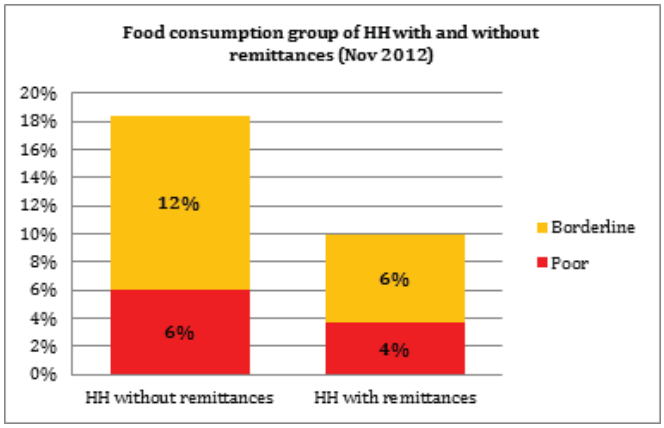
In absolute terms, food and non-food expenditures increased compared with previous rounds. Overall, these findings point towards increased cash availability in rural communities, due to increased remittances as well as increased prices.

Migration and remittances

Remittances play a major role in household' livelihoods and have become the main source of income for families to meet their daily basic needs. **Nearly 45 percent of households reported to have at least one family member in labour migration.** The overwhelming majority are in Russia.

The highest proportions of households with labour migrants were found in livelihood Zone 2 and Zones 9 and 11, where 65 percent and 52 percent (for last two zones) of the interviewed households said they had a family member out of the location for work.

Thirty-seven percent of the families reported that they received remittances over the past three months and households estimated that remittances make up about 35 percent of their household income.
The assessment indicates that the number of people in poor and borderline dietary diversity in food consumption is higher among households that do not receive regular assistance from outside, compared to those who receive remittances.



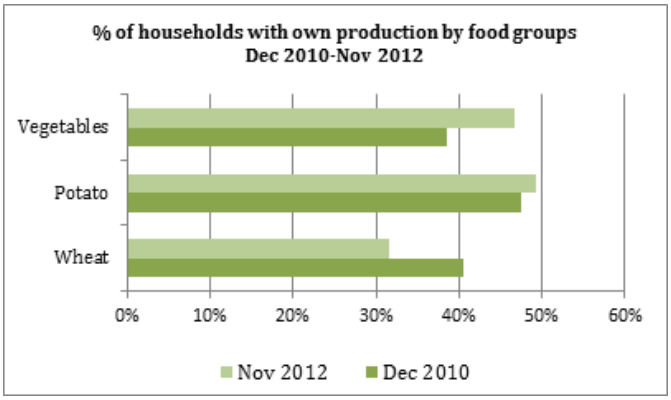
Families with regular remittances enjoy better dietary diversity in food consumption and tend to have access to more educational opportunities, health care and other services

Agriculture and livestock

Own production is the main access to cereals for 22 percent of households, which is typical for the post-harvest season.

The percent of households engaged in wheat production has decreased by eight percent, while households engaged in potato and vegetable production has slightly increased compared to the same season in 2010.

About 84 percent of the households owned livestock in November 2012, slightly more than in previous rounds.



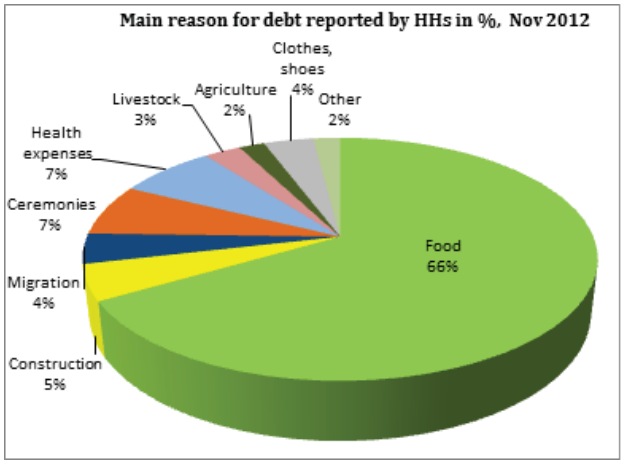
Overall, 73 percent owned cattle, 47 percent goats and sheep, 38 percent poultry, and 22 percent horses and/or donkeys.

Indebtedness

More than 33 percent of households interviewed accrued new debt in the past three months. This is 5 percent less than in March 2011.

By far, the most important reason for taking out new debt was to buy food, followed by payment for medications and medical care, and ceremonies.

Five percent of debts used for construction purposes and a smaller amount for purchasing cloth, shoes and agricultural inputs (seeds, tools, etc.).



Outlook for the coming six months (December 2012 to May 2013)

The food security situation in the coming tree months will deteriorate in most areas as winter sets in. Remote areas will be particularly affected due to difficulties in accessing markets and higher transportation costs for delivery of food and non-food supplies.

Import prices for wheat and wheat flour in Kazakhstan are expected to remain high. It is unlikely that the situation will change in the coming months as prices traditionally increase during the lean season. This is in response to demand, as household stocks are depleted and more people turn to the markets. Poor households with no access to their own food stocks for consumption, or remittances are particularly vulnerable when this pattern occurs.

Fuel prices are expected to remain high during the coming months. There is a small possibility they may decline due to the new agreement between Tajikistan and Russia on the provision of one million tons of duty free fuel, which is expected to come into effect in the first quarter of 2013.

Remittances will continue to be critical for household food security. The inflow of remittances is likely to be sustained during 2013 due to positive economic prospects in Russia.

The food security situation will improve again in May/June 2013, when the winter wheat harvest season begins. Production prospects in Tajikistan are perceived as favourable, taking into account early season rainfall conditions.

Action points

The following actions are recommended to mitigate the impact of the current winter period on the most vulnerable households, and to protect and strengthen their livelihoods and resilience:

- Closely monitor the inflow of remittances and prices of food and fuel in the coming months.
- Provide temporary food assistance to the most food insecure zones, targeting the most vulnerable groups during the peak of the lean season.
- In the medium term increase efforts to enhance the resilience of food insecure households through asset creation schemes with a focus on agriculture and rehabilitation of basic infrastructure.

Food security overview by zone

Food Security Zones	Trend compared to December 2010			Current status/action points	3 months outlook	6 months outlook
	Food Consumption	Livelihood Coping/Asset Depletion Strategies	% Food Expenditure			
Livelihood Zone 1: Eastern Pamir Plateau Livestock Zone				High percentage of households with poor and borderline food consumption. High percent of food expenditure. High use of livelihood coping/asset depletion strategies	↓	→
Livelihood Zone 2: Western Pamir Valley Migratory Work Zone	→	↑	↓	High percent of food expenditure. May deteriorate in remote areas due to difficulties in accessibility.	↓	→
Livelihood Zone 3: Western Pamir Irrigated Agriculture Zone	→	↑	↓	High percent of food expenditure. May deteriorate in remote areas.	↓	↑
Livelihood Zone 4: Rasht Valley Irrigated Potato Zone	↑	↑	→	The food security situation remains stable. May deteriorate in remote areas.	→	→
Livelihood Zone 5: Khatlon Mountain Agro-Pastoral Zone	↑	→	↓	High percent of food expenditure. Expected deterioration within next 3 months.	→	→
Livelihood Zone 6: Southern Khatlon Cotton, Vegetable and Wheat Zone	↑	↑	↑	Despite improvement in food security situation still high percentage of households with poor and borderline food consumption.	↓	↑
Livelihood Zone 7: Khatlon Rain fed Wheat and Livestock Zone	↓	↓	→	High percentage of households with poor and borderline food consumption. Fewer food groups consumed. High use of livelihood coping strategies.	→	↑
Livelihood Zone 8: Central and Eastern Tajikistan Agro-Industrial Zone	→	↑	↑	The food security situation remains stable. Fewer food stocks.	↓	↑
Livelihood Zone 9: Eastern and Central Zeravshan Valley Agro-pastoral Zone	↑	↑	↑	Less production and fewer food stocks. Expected deterioration within next 3 months.	→	→
Livelihood Zone 10: Panjakent Rice, Fruit, and Vegetable Zone	↑	→	↓	Less production and fewer food stocks. Expected deterioration within next 3 months.	↓	→
Livelihood Zone 11: Ghonchi and Istaravshan Rainfed Cereal, Fruit, and Vegetable Zone	↑	↑	↓	High percent of food expenditure. May deteriorate in remote areas within next 3 months.	↓	↑
Livelihood Zone 12: North Sughd Agro-Industrial Zone	↑	↑	→	High percent of food expenditure. May deteriorate in remote areas.	↓	↑
Livelihood Zone 13: Khatlon Agro-industrial Peri-urban Zone				Fewer food stocks. Expected deterioration within next 3 months, maily in rural areas.	↓	↑

Trend		Current food security status
→	Stable	Food secure
↑	Improvement	Mildly food insecure
↓	Deterioration	Moderately food insecure

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The FSMS provides reliable data which is integrated into the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) system along with data from other sources to make a composite analytical statement on the state of food security in the regions.

The system covers 5 sentinel sites per livelihood zone. In total 1,300 households in 65 sites interviewed. The information is representative for the trend and cannot be projected at population level.

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