

## Executive Brief: **Tajikistan** Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)

### Overview

Tajikistan is a mountainous, landlocked low-income food-deficit country. It is affected by widespread poverty, the highest among all states of the former Soviet Union. It is estimated that 64 percent of the Tajik population live below the poverty line, while 18 percent fall under the extreme poverty level (World Bank 2003).

Fifteen years ago civil war devastated institutions and civil society. The government is slowly rebuilding its capacity, supported by humanitarian agencies. However basic health, education and social services are still poor. Health indicators are comparable to some of the world's poorest countries. The population also suffers from consequences of an unfavourable climate and frequent natural disasters such as floods, droughts and earthquakes. All these factors have led to widespread vulnerability and food insecurity.

Between June and December 2007, WFP and the Tajikistan Food Coordination Forum (including FAO, UNICEF, WFP, Oxfam, Save the Children, Agha Khan Foundation, Mission East and Action Against Hunger) piloted an IPC funded by ECHO.

The purpose of the IPC pilot in Tajikistan was to: test the IPC's applicability to Tajikistan, provide a classification of food insecurity, offer insight into the causes of food insecurity, and suggest responses. The IPC situation analysis map will be updated quarterly to monitor changes.

### How was the IPC conducted?

A Technical Working Group made of experts from the agencies of the Food Coordination Forum compiled all available information relevant to food security (nutrition surveys, vulnerability analyses, food production statistics, and data on land cover and use, livelihoods, population densities, health and education). The data was analysed, and its strength and weakness considered. The decision on classification was reached by consensus among experts on the basis of the best available information.

Limitations: the IPC reliance on secondary data forces analysts to consider data that may at times be dated, or have poor methodology. In this case, the results of the 2003 VAM study which are now dated and of the 2005 VAM study which was criticised at that time were used but with caution. Data on key indicators, such as wasting and stunting, were not available at sub-regional level.

### How does Tajikistan classify?

**The whole country is classified as chronically food insecure with varying degrees of vulnerability.**

**The primary factor contributing to this food insecurity is economic access, in other words, chronic poverty. The situation is exacerbated by a high frequency of natural disasters.**

Due to the topography of the country, a vertical classification has been adopted. Indeed elevation and slope determine vegetative cover and land potential and to a large extent livelihoods. Each Region was divided into three distinct classes: flat, hilly and mountain. This helps better capture the intra-region diversity of

#### **The IPC: classifying food security**

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a **standardized scale to describe the food security situation** in a given country according to 5 Phases:

- 1- generally food secure
- 2- chronically food insecure
- 3- acute food and livelihood crisis
- 4- humanitarian emergency
- 5- famine/humanitarian catastrophe

First developed by FAO in Somalia, the IPC is being further developed and refined. WFP is working with FAO, FEWS NET, CARE, OXFAM and Save the Children to adapt the IPC to other countries and contexts. The goal is to develop and advocate for a **commonly accepted, standardized tool for classifying food insecurity to facilitate comparison between countries and over time.**

The IPC is not an assessment method per se. It integrates information and analyses from diverse sources to classify food security according to reference outcomes that are, for most of them, drawn from recognized international standards.

So far, the IPC has being piloted in East, Central and Southern Africa, in Asia as well as in Latin America.

food security. This distinction broadly conforms to the prevalent livelihoods (people from the same class have usually similar livelihoods).

All areas are chronically food insecure. To refine the classification, chronic vulnerability phase of the IPC has been divided in three levels of vulnerability (low, medium and high).

The most vulnerable areas of the country are:

- the mountainous areas of GBAO and Kulyab,
- the flat areas of Kulyab.

The least vulnerable areas are:

- the flat areas of Sughd and DRD.
- the hilly areas of DRD and Kurgan-Tube

The rest of the country is chronically food insecure with medium vulnerability.

To establish the classification, the following contributing factors were considered: hazards, dominant livelihoods, health and education service levels and the consumption of imported wheat (a better quality and more expensive) as a broad indicator for purchasing power and wealth.

## **The profile of food insecurity and vulnerability**

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### **Areas with the highest vulnerability:**

➤ Mountainous areas of GBAO: the food insecurity and vulnerability are attributed to the area's extremely high altitude and remoteness coupled with poor access to health service, medium access to education, and poor consumption of imported wheat. There is no industry and only limited opportunities for agriculture, predominantly the cultivation of potatoes. The population experiences a barrage of hazards including floods, avalanches, snow, landslides, droughts and hail. Food insecurity is mainly due to a lack of access (economic and physical) to food.

➤ Flat areas of Kulyab: these areas have much better physical access than the mountains of GBAO but are engulfed in extreme poverty. The cotton growing farmers are in extreme debt and reliance on remittances is high. They have poor access to health services, and poor consumption of imported wheat. The population suffers from droughts and floods.

**Areas with medium vulnerability:** Medium vulnerability refers to areas with relatively more stability and less risk to destabilizing factors. However, the unique climate and topography of Tajikistan rule out such concrete classification. An area of medium vulnerability may, under stress of drought, flood or earthquake, shift into high vulnerability or a higher phase of food insecurity. That is why the IPC map and its classifications require constant updates through periodic monitoring.

**Areas with the lowest vulnerability:** The flat areas of Sughd and flat and hilly areas of DRD have relatively low vulnerability. Sughd lies in the fertile Ferghana valley and represents the most fertile soils in Tajikistan. DRD is the main industrial zone of the country. The population's purchasing power is high. They have better access to health and education services. They suffer however from floods, droughts and hail. Rural populations consist of cotton growers in flat areas, and live off of rainfed agriculture (wheat) and horticulture in the hilly areas.

## **Understanding food insecurity and vulnerability**

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**Food supply and availability:** Tajikistan is a food deficit country, but its capacity to import food is sufficient due in large part to revenues from aluminium and cotton exports. Despite a positive food balance at national level, food and nutrition remains problematic at the household level.

Due to the topography, only 10 percent of the land is suitable for cultivation. Scarcity and poor quality of agricultural inputs and high levels of pest damage result in poor yields.

**Access to food:** Food insecurity and vulnerability are linked to the household's economic difficulty in purchasing food. Although most rural households have access to land, their production provides a maximum of 50 percent of a family's annual food needs. Food purchases are necessary and can represent up to 80 percent of the cash income of a family.

**Food utilisation:** The prevalence of global acute malnutrition and global chronic malnutrition are 7.6 and 20.7 percent respectively. Moderate and severe underweight prevalence amongst children in the 0-59 month age group is 17 percent, of which 4 percent are severely underweight.

**Factors contributing to vulnerability:** Natural disasters such as drought, flood, earthquake, hail and landslides are frequent. Man-made disasters such as political tensions with/in neighbouring countries could disrupt import of food commodities, disrupt remittances or initiate a sudden influx of refugees. Recent global price rises of food and fuel have resulted in significant price hikes in local markets resulting in large number of people falling under the poverty line. As these factors are dynamic, constant monitoring is required to identify changes and to update these vulnerabilities.

## **Recommendations for food security analysis in the country**

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**Ecological zoning:** Food security should be analysed using ecological zoning. Tajikistan has a unique topography. Elevation and slope determine vegetative cover and land potential consequently dictating, to a large extent, livelihoods. This contributes to create more diversity within regions than between regions. For example, there is much in common, in terms of food security, amongst people in mountain areas across Regions. Surveys and assessments should divide each Region into flat, hilly and mountain areas to better capture vulnerability. Malnutrition rates by Region obscure differences between valley and mountain dwellers and averages actually represent neither group suggesting caution in using results from regional level studies.

**Wheat quality as broad indicator for poverty:** Wheat is the staple diet in Tajikistan and is consumed by all strata of society, in all parts and over all seasons. Two qualities of wheat are consumed: the expensive imported wheat and the less expensive local produce. Rich families use imported wheat throughout the year while poor households can only afford local produce. There is a group between the two which uses both types of wheat depending on price and purchasing power. Wheat quality can be used as a broad proxy indicator for poverty and could be used for secondary level targeting which requires identification of poor Jamoats<sup>1</sup> and villages. There are some exceptions, such as Murghab in GBAO, where only imported wheat is available. The indicator would be used best in combination with other tools.

**Representative Jamoats:** Normally, monitoring household food security requires periodic collection of large amounts of data. However, resource constraints preclude such a system for this country. Consequently, information needs of the designed IPC monitoring system have been greatly reduced by identifying representative Jamoats. A representative Jamoat would have common food security characteristics of availability, access and utilization to a group of Jamoats (often, but not necessarily, contiguous). Monitoring results of a representative Jamoat can be extrapolated to the group of Jamoats it represents.

## **Response options<sup>2</sup>**

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Achieving food security would require a combination of short, medium and long term interventions at national, regional and village level.

- The current revision of agriculture policy to include land reform, debt relief and credit schemes is crucial for the cotton growing flat areas of Khatlon and Sugdh.
- Rangeland management and establishment of cold chains and abattoirs for the hilly areas would promote the latent potential in the livestock sector.
- Planting of trees and shrubs in the mountain areas would mitigate effects of natural disasters such as floods and landslides.
- WFP should implement the following interventions: a school feeding program in all areas, food-for-work program in hilly and mountain areas and a food-for-health program in areas with poor health indicators.

**Available resources on food security in Tajikistan:** A food security monitoring page has been setup at the United Nations Tajikistan website ([untj.org](http://untj.org)) where results from periodic monitoring, publications from government and humanitarian agencies and prices in key markets are posted. The IPC Situation Analysis Map will be updated on a quarterly basis by the Food Coordinating Forum. Once established, the capacity is to be transferred to the government to ensure sustainability.

### **For more information, contact:**

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<sup>1</sup> A Jamoat is an administrative division of a district

<sup>2</sup> Established by a programme targeting workshop, made of WFP staff members.

