The Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS) provides a seasonal snapshot of food insecurity in rural Tajikistan by analyzing data from 665 households and 475 key informants across 19 livelihood/geographical zones. The FSMS data signals incidents of critical food insecurity and malnutrition. This round covers the period from December 2011 to February 2012.

**Highlights**

- Key food security indicators – including food consumption and availability of food stocks – show deterioration compared to the same period in 2011.
- Reasons for this deterioration are the extended winter season and harvest failure due to poor weather conditions which was reported by 61 percent of the interviewed households. Last year these two shocks were reported by only 27 percent.
- Many households are benefitting from increasing remittances in 2011, which improve their purchasing power compared to the previous year. In 2011, official remittances increased by 31 percent compared to 2010.
- The increased remittances help mitigate the negative impacts of the harsh winter and remain as a main source of income of many households.
- Due to the long winter season and failed harvest in 2011, households are much more dependent on markets to meet their food needs. In March 2011, 19 percent of households reported own production as their main source for wheat and bread, this year only 8 percent.

**Context**

Tajikistan has experienced an extended winter season which started early in November 2011 and the last snowfall was reported in April this year. In a normal year, the winter season only starts in December and last up to March.

Poor rainfall conditions and irregular irrigation led to a poor wheat production in 2011/2012, which was estimated at 25 percent below the 2010/2011 and 8 percent below the past four year average according to the MOA/FAO/WFP’s Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM). The poor harvest was offset by a bumper harvest in Kazakhstan which was estimated to be 90 percent above the 2010 outcome according to the United Stated Department of Agriculture (USDA). This significantly contributed to stable and sufficient supplies of wheat flour to the country.

Remittances are a strong and significant driver of the domestic economy and make up around 45 percent of the country’s GDP. Most of the seasonal labour migrants are in Russia from March to November before the winter season starts. Due to the good economy in Russia, the inflow of official remittances reached a record peak at around US$2.9 billion in 2011, surpassing the 2010 record of US$2.2 billion.

Wheat prices stabilized and started to decline in the second half of 2011. However, they still remain among the highest in Central Asia. Wheat prices decreased in the first quarter in 2012 compared to the previous quarter by 4 percent due the good harvest in Kazakhstan but are 7 percent higher than the
first quarter in 2011 and 32 percent above the 5-year average. Prices of other staples increased over the winter season, including meat by 4 percent, rice by 14 percent and potato by 15 percent. They also increased compared to 2011.

A special concern is the increasing fuel prices which rose by around one-third compared to 2010. This was caused by increasing local demand due to the harsh winter season, increased export tariffs by Russia and globally increasing fuel prices.

The World Bank and UNICEF report “Situation Analysis on Improving Economic Outcomes by Expanding Nutrition Programming in Tajikistan” indicates that malnutrition remains an important public health and development challenge in Tajikistan: 35 percent of the 7,676 deaths of Tajik children under the age of five that occurred in 2011 were due to undernutrition.1 A Demographic Health Survey is planned for June 2012 which will provide updated information on the nutrition situation.

Shocks and coping strategies

Similar to the FSMS round in March 2011, high food prices remain the main shock for households. More than 80 percent of the respondents reported high food prices as one of the main three shocks they experienced in the past three months. This is slightly lower compared to March 2011, when high food prices were reported by nearly all households. This shock is particularly mentioned in zones where households depend on the markets purchase food from markets, such as Muminobod/Shurobod, Ayni, Nurobod and Vanj.

Reduced drinking water and severe weather conditions were both reported by 45% of households. Last year, only 22 percent of households reported severe weather conditions as a major shock. Mastchoh, Temurmalik and Tursunzoda are among the zones most heavily affected this year.

Harvest failure because of harsh weather conditions affected around 16 percent of households, which is much higher than in March 2011, when only 5 percent reported this shock. The scarcity of irrigation water remains among the top priorities, especially among farming households.

Shocks that were less frequently reported compared to one year ago are difficulties to send migrants to Russia and reduced access to credit. This is an indication that the overall economic situation has improved due to increased inflow of remittances from labour migrants. New shocks that were mentioned in this round were increased fuel and fodder prices. This reflects both the extended winter season as well as the globally increasing fuel prices.


2 The Coping Strategy Index takes into account the frequency of use of the most harmful coping mechanisms such as not eating during a full day or adults restricting their consumption to allow children to eat.
To get by, households use coping strategies. The frequency and type of coping strategies indicate the level of stress caused by various shocks. Households were more stressed in March 2012 compared to the 2011 summer season; however, the stress level has reduced compared to one year ago according to the reduced coping strategy index which is based on five food consumption-related strategies.

The most commonly applied strategies are reliance on less preferred and less expensive food, purchase of food on credit and borrowing food/relying on support from family or friends.

However, in comparison to one year ago, these strategies are applied by slightly fewer households. Limiting the portion size of meals, reducing the number of meals and restricting the consumption of adults in favor of feeding small children are also less frequently reported this time compared to one year ago.

Strategies that have increased remarkably are increased labour migration and consumption of seed stocks. This reflects the increased opportunities for labour migrants in Russia and poor harvest outcome experienced by households in 2011.

Also, decreased expenditure on health care and purchase of medicine and reduced investments in agriculture are commonly used and have increased compared to last year. This may impact on agricultural productivity this year and poses increased risks to health conditions of the most vulnerable groups such as children, pregnant women and the elderly.
Food consumption and dietary diversity

Food consumption and dietary diversity usually decrease during the winter because households are running out of stocks from their own production and the range of food available on markets is limited.

While the number of households with poor food consumption has remained fairly stable in March 2012 compared to the previous year, households with borderline food consumption increased by 8 percent compared to July and by 4 percent compared to March 2011. This reflects the impact of the harsh winter season.

Zones 17 (Jergatol), 13 (Nurobod), 16 (Bobojon Gafurov) and 9 (Temurmalik) are the areas with the highest number of households with poor and borderline food consumption.

Food sources and food stocks

The agricultural sector has been heavily affected by the early and long winter season and has reduced households’ capacity to build sufficient stocks. Only 75 percent of all households interviewed report that they currently have food stocks in the house compared to 84 percent one year ago.

The largest difference can be observed for wheat flour. Also the duration of how long wheat stocks are lasting to meet household consumption needs has reduced from four to three weeks.

The same is reflected when looking at the food sources of households. In March 2011, 19 percent of households were able mainly rely on wheat from their own production; in 2012, only 8 percent.

Income and expenditures

Compared to one year ago, the importance of income activities for households has remained fairly stable. The most frequently reported income, taking multiple responses into account, is pensions and other benefits, closely followed by remittances.

Food crop production, last year on rank 3 was replaced by salaries and government job this year, reflecting the poor harvest season. The proportion of households receiving remittances and families with the main income- salaries and livestock production, has slightly increased compared to last year. The two income sources which show the highest seasonal variation are remittances and daily wage labour and both rise to higher levels in the summer compared to the winter months which provide fewer opportunities. In July 2011, 41 percent of households reported remittances as one their three main income sources and 25 percent daily wage labour.
Households spent 56 percent of their income on food over the past month compared to 63 percent in March 2011. More than half of food expenditure is spent on cereals (51 percent); one year ago this proportion was 56 percent. Proportions remained particularly high in remote areas which are heavily dependent on markets and areas affected by the poor harvest in 2011. In terms of absolute figures, food expenditure increased compared to one year ago. Overall, these findings point towards increased cash availability in rural communities, which could be related to increased remittances.

Also, the higher costs of fuel may have caused some shifts towards non-food expenditure compared to last year. The share of households’ expenditure on fuel increased 6.5 percentage points compared to July 2011 and by 3.5 percentage points compared to March 2011.

**Indebtedness**

More than 38 percent of households interviewed, accrued new debts in the past three months, which is 4 percent less than in March 2011. By far, the most important reason for taking out new debts was to buy food, followed by construction, payment of tickets for migration and ceremonies.

Overall, 20 percent of all households had to take out debts to purchase food over the past three months. One year ago, the proportion was 26 percent, an indication that households have a higher cash availability compared to last year.
Labour migration is a major livelihood strategy in the context of Tajikistan and a key factor for food security for many rural households. The level of remittances dropped remarkably during the global financial crisis in 2009 but the economy in Russia has recovered and 2011 has been a record year for remittance income.

Nearly 40 percent of households reported to have at least one labour migrant. The overwhelming majority are in Russia. The highest proportions of households with labour migrants were found in Vanj (71 percent), Qumsangir (60 percent) and Isfara (57 percent). More than 60 percent of households were able to pay the travel costs through savings or regular income, and about 36 percent of households had to take out a debt in the past to cover the expenses. Ticket costs generally increased over the past year, according to key informants.

Out of the household with labour migrants, 82 percent received remittances and households estimated that remittances make up about 63 percent of their household income. Among all households interviewed, 32 percent of households are receiving remittances. The proportion is similar to last year; however, it can be assumed that the level of remittances has increased given the statistics at national level.

The main use of remittances is for food, followed by household items, health expenses and ceremonies.

Agriculture and livestock

Extreme weather conditions have been a major impeding factor for the 2011 harvest. In total, 35 percent of households reported to produce wheat, 49 percent potatoes and 44 vegetables or pulses. For each crop, more than every second household reported to have produced less compared to the previous year.

The main reasons provided were bad climate conditions. This is particularly the case for the farmers in Mastchoh, Panjakent, Ghonchi, Ayni and Nurobod.

About four out of five households owned livestock in March 2012, the same proportion as in previous rounds. Out of these, 72 percent owned cattle, 42 percent goats and sheep, 40 percent poultry, and 24 percent horses and/or donkeys. Every fifth livestock owner reported death among their livestock over the past three months, slightly more than in March 2011. However, the underlying reasons were different: during the winter 2011, diseases were the overwhelming cause; in 2012, cold weather and lack of fodder were reported with much higher frequency. Livestock death was a particular concern in Zones 8 (Murghob), 15 (Faizobod), 7 (Kulob), 11 (Ayni), 2 (Mastchoh) and 9 (Temurmalik).
Outlook for the coming three months (April to June 2012)

The food security situation in the coming two months may deteriorate in a number of zones, particularly in remote areas. However, the situation should start improving by mid-year, when the winter wheat harvest season begins.

Food security in the country within this period will depend mostly on the following factors:

1. Prices of food and fuel 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 as more people will be depending on the markets. The demand for fuel will rise because of the harvest.

2. As a result, food access will become more difficult, particularly in remote areas. Food stocks have already depleted or are expected to deplete earlier as the second harvest crops of vegetables, potato, rice, etc. were lost in many areas due to early winter frosts.

3. The frequency and intensity of natural hazards such as floods and landslides are expected to increase during the upcoming “disaster season”. Locusts may cause a damage to agricultural crops in Khatlon.

4. Remittances continue to be critical for household food security and should be monitored closely – though the inflow of remittances is likely to be sustained during 2012 due to positive economic prospects in Russia.

5. Households which do not receive remittances are likely to engage in negative coping strategies such as selling assets or reducing essential expenses such as health care.

6. Good wheat production in Kazakhstan will further help in the provision of adequate supplies of wheat flour to Tajikistan and mitigate high prices.

Action points

The following actions are recommended to mitigate the impacts the extended winter period had on the food security situation of the most vulnerable households and to protect and strengthen their livelihoods:

- Monitor closely the economic situation in Russia, inflow of remittances and prices of food and fuel in the coming six months.

- Provide temporary food assistance in most food insecure zones targeting the most vulnerable groups, in particular in areas where access to food still remains difficult.

- Support farmers in areas most affected by crop production losses through the provision of good quality seeds and fertilizers. Support farmers through improved access to agricultural credit during the planting season.

- Strengthen programs aiming at improving irrigation systems and access to drinking water. Some of these asset-creation activities could be combined with food- or cash-for-work interventions in the most food insecure areas.

- Improve access to, and performance of local markets, repair of roads and bridges, possibly using food- or cash-for-work modalities.

- Strengthen nutrition surveillance in health clinics for improved monitoring of the nutrition situation.
### Food security overview by zone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Security Zone</th>
<th>Trend compared to March 2011</th>
<th>Current status/action points</th>
<th>3 months outlook</th>
<th>6 months outlook</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zone 1. Qumsangir</td>
<td>↑ ↓↓↓</td>
<td>The food security situation remains stable.</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>→</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone 2. Mastchoh</td>
<td>↑ ↑ → ↑</td>
<td>The food security situation remains stable.</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>→</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zone 3. Panjakent</td>
<td>↑ ↓ → ↑</td>
<td>Low food expenditure per capita and high coping strategy index. The situation may deteriorate in remote areas.</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↑</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zone 4. Ashk</td>
<td>↑ ↑ → ↑</td>
<td>The food security situation remains stable. May deteriorate in remote areas.</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone 5. Khuroson</td>
<td>↑ ↑ → ↑</td>
<td>Very low food stocks. Expected deterioration within next 3 months.</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↑</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zone 6. Vanj</td>
<td>↑ ↑ → ↑</td>
<td>The food security situation remains stable.</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>→</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zone 7. Kulob</td>
<td>→ → ↑</td>
<td>The food security situation remains stable.</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>→</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zone 8. Margob</td>
<td>↑ ↑ → ↑</td>
<td>The situation will be deteriorated due to difficulties in accessibility.</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone 9. Temuralik</td>
<td>↑ ↑ → ↑</td>
<td>High percentage of households with poor and borderline food consumption. Low food expenditure per capita.</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>→</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone 10. Ghonchi</td>
<td>→ → ↑</td>
<td>A stable food security situation. Low food expenditure per capita.</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>→</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone 11. Ayni</td>
<td>↓ ↑ → ↑</td>
<td>High percentage of households with poor and borderline food consumption. Low food expenditure per capita. High coping strategy index.</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone 12. Isfara</td>
<td>↓ ↓ → ↑</td>
<td>Low food stocks. The situation will be deteriorated in remote areas due to difficulties in accessibility.</td>
<td>↓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zone 14. Tursunzoda</td>
<td>→ ↑ → ↑</td>
<td>The food security situation remains stable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zone 15. Fazakbod</td>
<td>→ ↑ → ↑</td>
<td>High percentage of households with poor and borderline food consumption. Low food stocks.</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone 16. Ghafurov</td>
<td>↓ ↑ → ↑</td>
<td>High percentage of households with poor and borderline food consumption. Low expenditure per capita.</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone 17. Jargabol</td>
<td>→ ↑ → ↑</td>
<td>Very high percentage of households with poor and borderline food consumption. High Coping Strategy Index (CSI).</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>→</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone 18. Jilikul</td>
<td>↑ ↑ → ↑</td>
<td>The food security situation remains stable.</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>→</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone 19. Muminobod</td>
<td>↓ ↑ → ↑</td>
<td>Low food stocks. The situation will be deteriorated in remote areas due to difficulties in accessibility.</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>→</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Trend**

- ↓ Stable 1st Priority for action
- ↑ Improvement 2nd Priority for action
- ↓ Deterioration 3rd Priority for action

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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 data can be used by WFP and partners to better target their interventions.

The methodology used for this bulletin is in line with WFP’s corporate methodology on food security assessments.

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