
# Tajikistan

## Food Security Monitoring System

The Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS) provides a seasonal trend of food insecurity in rural Tajikistan by analyzing data from 1,300 rural households across 13 livelihood zones. The data for this bulletin was collected in December 2014.

## Highlights

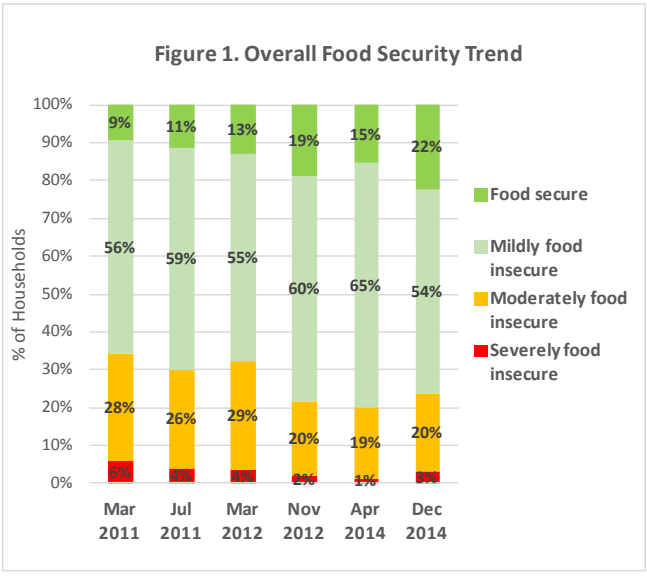
• Seasonal food insecurity observed in December 2014 shows no improvement compared to November 2012. Change, however, is noticeable against last April, with an increase at both ends of the spectrum: more households have become food secure (22 percent) but more households have also become severely/moderately food insecure (23 percent), which is a cause for concern at the beginning of the lean season (Figure 1).

• A lower wheat harvest and a poor potato harvest contributed to reduced household food stocks compared to same period of the year in previous FSMS rounds. A depreciated national currency and higher regional food prices also pushed up local food prices thereby decreasing access to food.

• Food consumption scores deteriorated with 11 percent of the households scoring 'borderline' and 5 percent 'poor'. The FSMS also observed that households whose income relies mostly on social benefits, welfare or daily wage labour were the most affected.

• The increased return of labour migrants and the decreasing volume of remittances has impacted households' welfare and food security: remittances were the main source of income for only 15 percent of households in December 2014, against 27 percent in November 2012. The impact of the Russian economic slowdown, however, will be felt more severely in the spring, when most seasonal labour migrants normally leave for Russia to seek employment.

• Overall food security is expected to deteriorate throughout the lean season, until the start of the winter harvest in May. Food security should, therefore, be monitored closely in the coming months, especially in **livelihood zones showing the most signs of vulnerability: the Rasht valley, the Ghonchi and Istaravshan area, the Eastern Pamir plateau and most of the Khatlon region.**

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Fighting Hunger Worldwide

## Context

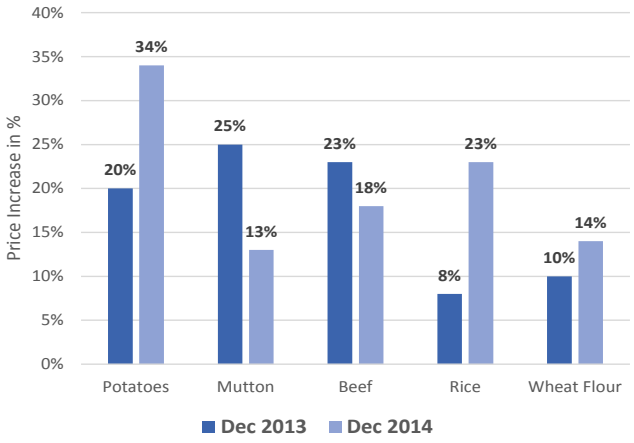
Despite economic growth averaging 7 percent on an annual basis in the last five years (and 6 percent in 2014)[1], Tajikistan remains a low-income country[2] with a 'serious' food security issue according to IFPRI's Global Hunger Index[3]. Poverty affects an estimated 36 percent of the population, including 6.5 percent affected by extreme poverty.

Tajikistan is also a food-deficit country importing over half its consumption requirements, which exposes its population to global food price fluctuations and other external factors.

Over a million of Tajikistan's 8.2 million people work abroad as labour migrants, mostly in the Russian Federation, making Tajikistan the country most reliant on remittances in the world (49 percent of GDP in 2013). The Russian economic slowdown has so far resulted in 11 percent less Tajik labour migrants in 2014 than in 2013[4], and in a reduction of 8.3 percent in remittances[5]. The rouble crisis has also affected the national currency, which depreciated by 8 percent against the US dollar in the last six months of 2014. Consequently, food imports, commonly denoted in US dollars, have become more expensive as well.

The wheat harvest shrank in 2014 compared to 2013. The production of wheat grain, the most important staple product, dropped by 8 percent countrywide and by 14 percent in the Sughd region. Consequently, the tonnage of imported cereals increased by more than 4 percent in 2014. The production of potatoes, the second most important staple product, decreased by 23 percent in 2014 compared to the year before. The fruit and vegetable harvests, however, increased by 4 percent.

**Figure 2. Price Increases of Commodities (December/December)**




The reduced harvests, increased imports and currency depreciation have put pressure on local food prices for potatoes and cereals (figure 2). While the national inflation rate was estimated at 6.5 percent in 2014[6], the price of the minimum food basket increased by 14 percent[7]. The impact of lower harvests and increased imports was compounded by higher regional food prices resulting from sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation and the consequent diversion of its import markets from European to Asian countries.

The impact of the 14 percent rise in the price of wheat flour will be worst for poorer households, as their diet relies heavily on bread relative to the diet of higher income households[8].

Malnutrition levels remain problematic in Tajikistan, with acute malnutrition (wasting) affecting 10 percent of children under five, including 4 percent severely wasted. Chronic malnutrition (stunting) has not significantly changed since the last nationwide survey in 2005, with a prevalence of 26 percent in measured in the last DHS[9]. Anemia is also a public health problem, with a prevalence of 24 percent amongst women of reproductive age and of 29 percent in children 6-59 months[10].

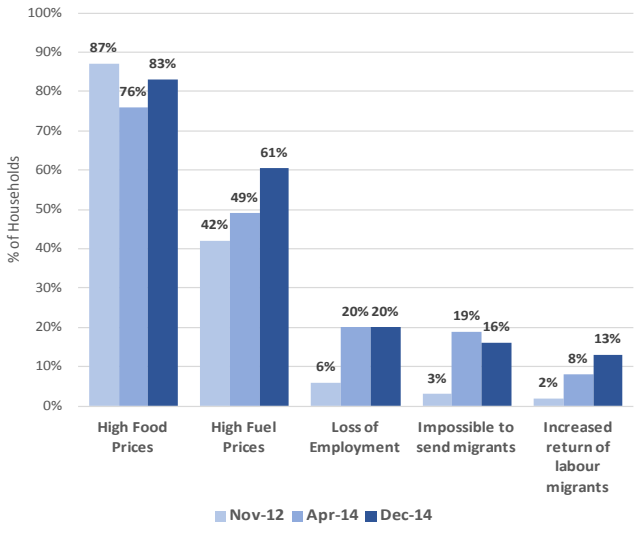
1 World Bank (2015) for 2010-2013 and Asian Development Bank (2015) vestimate for 2014
2 World Bank (2015)
3 International Food Policy Research Institute , 2014 Global Hunger Index (GHI)
4 Russian Federal Migration Service (2014)
5 National Bank of Tajikistan (2015)
6 Asian Development Bank (2015)
7 Based on price calculations for WFP's minimum monthly food basket.
8 State Committee on Statistics, Food Insecurity Assessment (2005)
9 Tajikistan Demographic and Health Survey (2012)
10 Tajikistan Demographic and Health Survey (2012)

## Exposure to Economic and Natural Shocks

**High food prices were reported by households as the main economic shock experienced between October and December 2014.** 83 percent of the interviewed households reported unusual high food prices in the last three months. This figure is slightly less than in November 2012 (87 percent), though higher than in April 2014 (76 percent) (Figure 3). This perception is corroborated by the sharp rise in the price of the food basket in 2014 (see Context section). High food prices were reported as a shock mostly in the livelihood zones Ghonchi and Istaravshan, Rasht valley and Central Zerafshan valley, where prices soared due to poor harvests and the suspension of cross-border trade during a temporary closure of the Tajik-Kyrgyz border. On average, high food prices remained the most frequently reported shock and were reported more than twice as much as the most frequently indicated natural shock.

**The number of households affected by high fuel prices increased from 49 percent in April to 61 percent in December (Figure 3),** despite a fall of the global oil prices between April and December 2014. Fuel prices in Tajikistan rose by 19 percent between April and December 2014 as the oil supply to Central Asia was limited due to repair works at key pipelines and refineries in Russia, and as Tajikistan exceeded the limit of its tax-free oil imports.

Figure 3. Households Reporting Economic Shocks



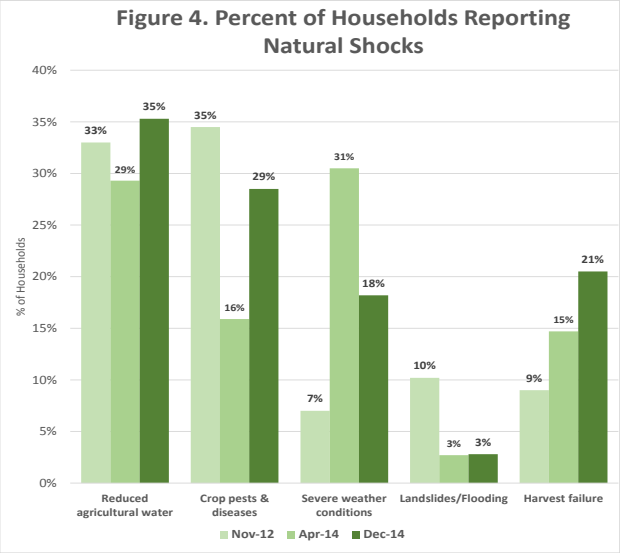

**In December 2014, 20 percent of households reported that they were impacted by the loss of employment (Figure 3).** Despite steady economic growth in the last two years, the loss of employment in 2014 was a larger shock for households than in December 2012, when merely 6 percent of households reported it. Hit most by unemployment was the Ghonchi and Istaravshan livelihood zone, where 39 percent of households reported job losses. This is also likely to have been the result of the poor harvests which resulted in a decline in demand for daily wage labour.

**The impossibility to send labour migrants was less of an issue in December 2014 than in April 2014.** Both the April and December 2014 observations, however, were much higher than in November 2012. High tax fees, entry denials and Russia's economic slowdown are increasingly impeding labour migration from Tajikistan to Russia. This is likely to hurt even more in the spring, when most labour migrants usually leave for Russia. Nonetheless, the December 2014 figure is already fivefold what it was two years ago (16 percent against 3 percent), indicating a serious deterioration in foreign labour opportunities.

**The number of households reporting an increased return of labour migrants from Russia went up from a negligible 2 percent in December 2012 to 13 percent in December 2014 (Figure 3).** This clear negative trend has to be related to the Russian economic slowdown and is likely to be amplified in the coming months. The Ghonchi Istaravshan and Rasht valley livelihood zones stood out with a staggering 34 to 36 percent of households reporting increased returns in the three previous months. Traditional remittance-reliant regions in the Pamir, however, reported increased returns below the national average.

**The most frequent natural shock in December 2014 was the reduced availability of agricultural water[11], reported by 35 percent of households (Figure 4).** Vast discrepancies were found between livelihood zones. The Ghonchi and Istaravshan region and the Rasht valley had again the worst scores for this indicator (83 and 53 percent respectively). Reported harvest failures showed a significant increase compared to November 2012 (from 9 to 21 percent) and were strongly correlated with the reduced availability of agricultural water. Harvest failures were worst in the Ghonchi and Istaravshan region, Panjakent and the Rasht valley (mentioned by 34, 34, and 30 percent of households, respectively). Landslides and floods did not have a significant impact, except in Panjakent where 16 percent of households reported being affected.

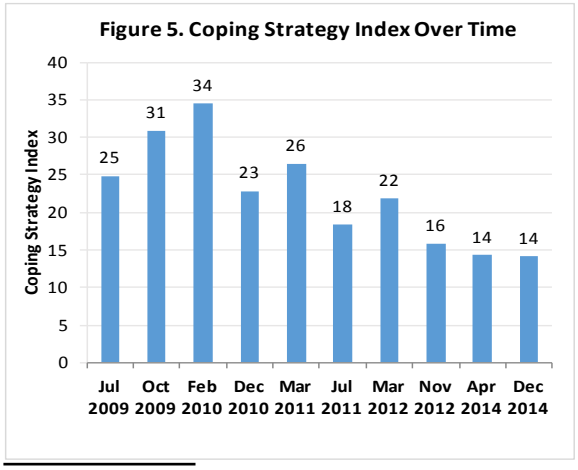
11 To be understood as a lack of irrigation water and/or precipitation




## Coping Strategies

The usage of coping strategies indicates how households cope with food shortages through changing their food consumption, livelihoods or assets. The Coping Strategy Index (CSI)[12] indicates if a household has adapted its food consumption in order to meet the food needs of certain members. More than economic factors, coping strategies are closely connected to the harvest and lean seasons and food stock availability (elaborated on in a different section).

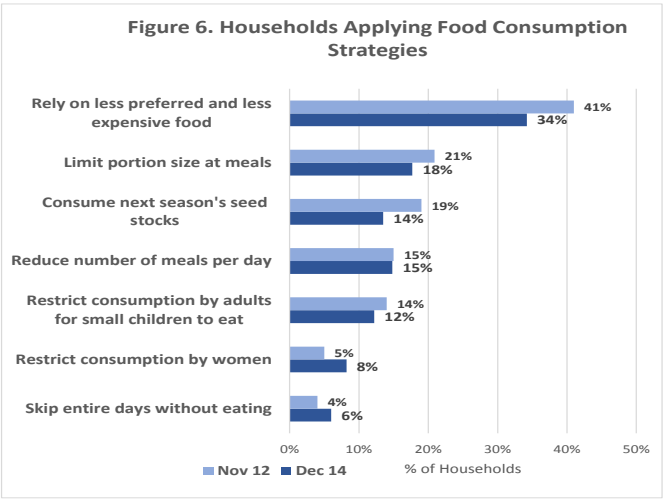
**The overall CSI in December 2014 has not significantly improved compared to November 2012, despite a positive trend recorded since 2010 (Figure 5).** Again, it is unlikely that the positive score recorded in April 2014 will be maintained in 2015, as households will likely resort to more coping mechanisms to compensate for depleting stocks until the end of the winter lean season.



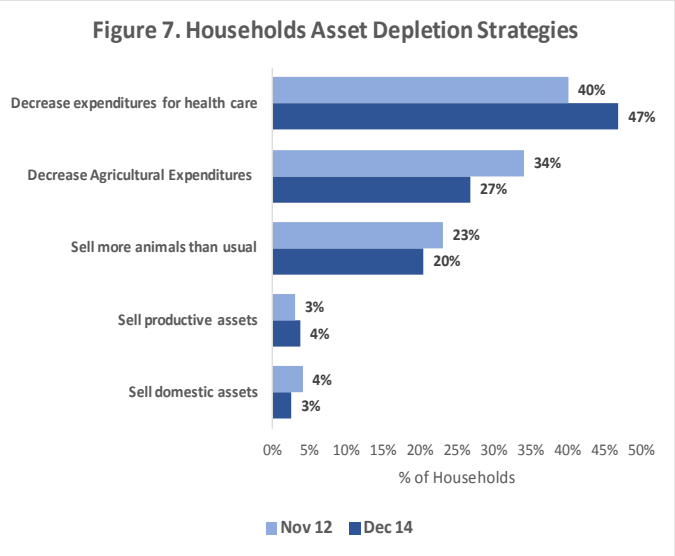

12 The CSI is based on the five coping strategies: relying on less expensive food, borrowing food, limiting the portion sizes, limiting consumption of adults and reducing the number of meals per day. To calculate the index, different weights are attached to these strategies, followed by a multiplication of these strategies by the amount of days in the past week in which the strategy was used.

**The areas surrounding Kurgan-Tyube (Khatlon region) scored worst with an average CSI of 23, followed by Ghonchi Ishtaravshan and Northern Sughd which scored 22 and 21 respectively.** It is interesting to note that livelihood zones with the worst food consumption scores (poor and borderline) tend to resort less to coping mechanisms than the better off zones: this is the case for the Rasht valley, and for the Khatlon rainfed, southern Khatlon and Eastern Pamir livelihood zones.

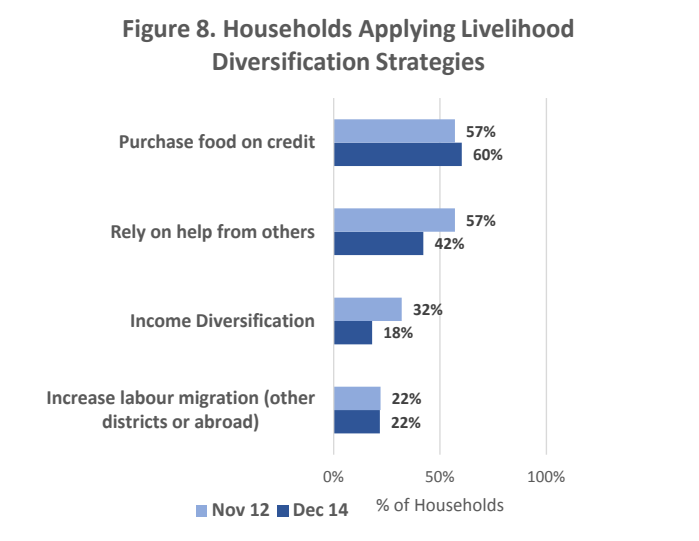
**The most commonly applied strategies were reliance on less preferred and less expensive food, limiting the portion sizes of meals and reducing the number of meals per day (Figure 6).** Differences between livelihood zones, however, are stark. In the Ghonchi and Ishtaravshan livelihood zone restricted consumption by women was reported by 25 percent of households (against 8 percent for the national average); in Northern Sughd 15 percent regularly skipped entire days without eating (against 6 percent for the national average); and 36 percent of households reported consuming seed stocks in the Khatlon Mountain livelihood zone (against only 14 percent for the national average).




**On average, households made less use of asset depletion strategies in December 2014 compared to November 2012, especially of those strategies affecting livestock and agricultural production (Figure 7).** One notable exception is for decreasing expenses on healthcare, with the Ghonchi and Istaravshan and Eastern Pamir Plateau livelihood zones most affected, yet with no parallel increase noted in the reported occurrence of illnesses and accidents.

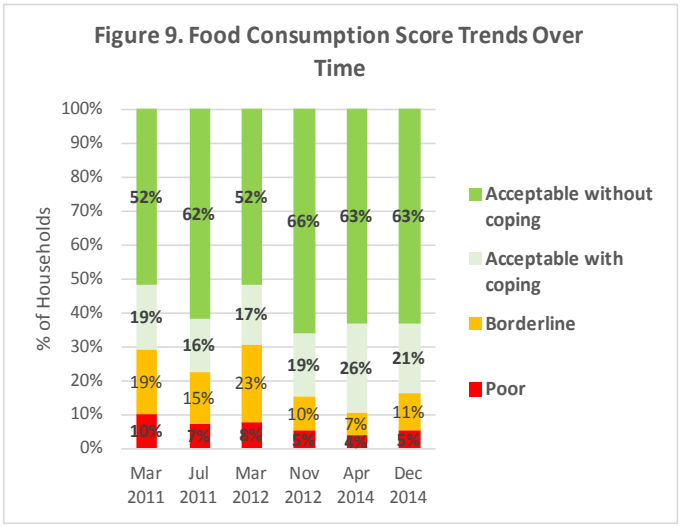



**Overall, households resorted to fewer livelihood diversification strategies in December 2014 than in November 2012 (Figure 8).** Purchasing food on credit remained the most frequently used strategy, while significantly fewer households depended on the help of others to meet their consumption needs (42 percent against 57 percent), or resorted to income diversification (18 percent against 32 percent). No increase was noted in labour migration. There remain, however, significant differences between livelihood zones in the frequency and type of strategies applied. For instance, the purchase of food on credit is reported by 89 percent of households in the Rasht valley (the highest reported use of any coping strategy in all livelihood zones). Likewise, households in the Rasht valley also scored highest in resorting to increased labour migration (42 percent).

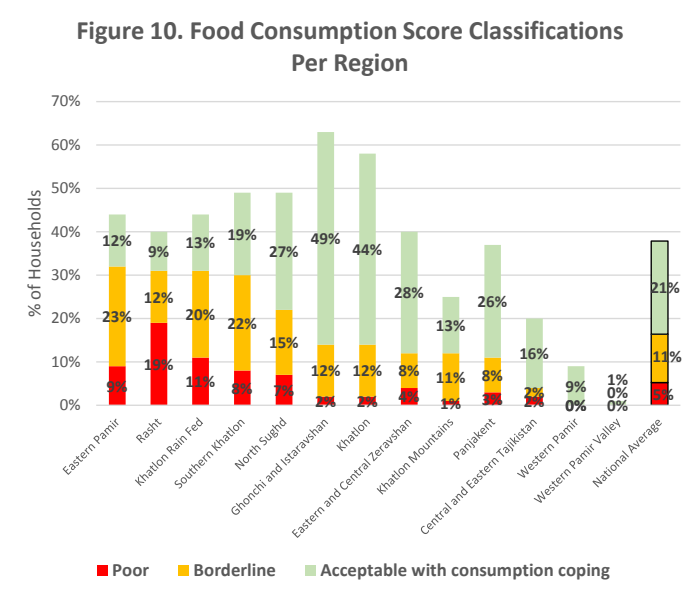


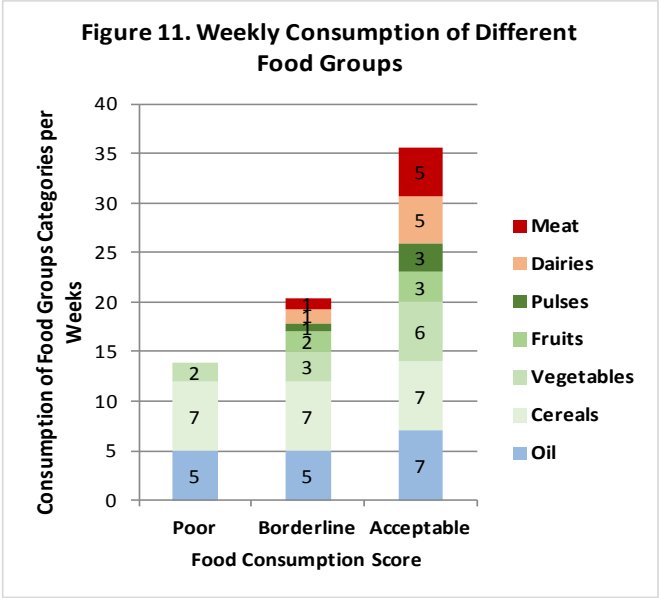

## Food Consumption Score and Dietary Diversity

**The Food Consumption Score (FCS) measured in December 2014 is only slightly worse than the one measured in November 2012,** and consistent with levels usually observed at the beginning of the lean season (Figure 9). It should be noted that the net improvement observed in April 2014 (at the end of the lean season) is unlikely to be repeated in 2015 with less favourable conditions, including a below average harvest and reduced remittances. Instead, the FCS is expected to worsen as the lean season reaches its peak, when one in every four Tajik households usually has a poor or borderline FCS (March 2011 and March 2012) and when barely 50 percent of households are able to consume adequate food without resorting to some form of coping mechanism.




**FCS outcomes of the Rasht valley were the lowest in Tajikistan with one in every five households having a poor FCS**, against only one in ten in April 2014 (at the end of the winter lean season). The low plains of Khatlon (Southern and Rain Fed livelihood zones), the Eastern Pamir plateau and North Sughd (to a lesser extent) also scored poorly (Figure 10). Despite performing badly on other indicators, the Ghonchi and Istaravshan region has a lower percentage of 'poor' and 'borderline' households than the national average. However, the extremely high number of coping strategies used in this region indicates that many households might fall into the borderline category later in the lean season.



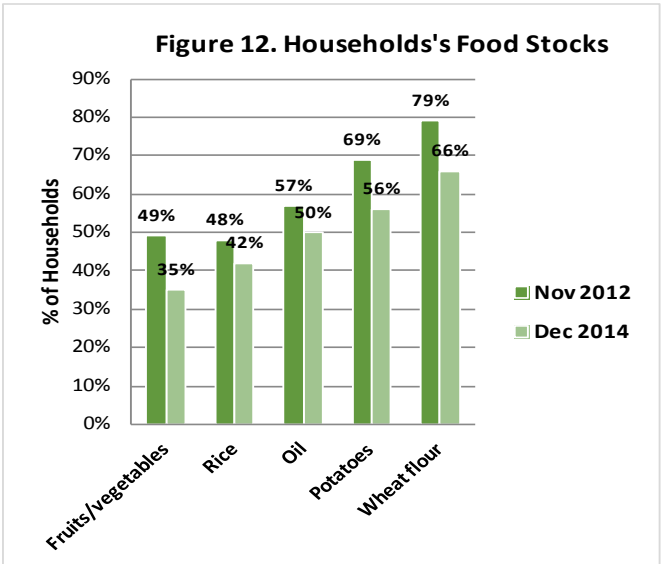




**Those households impacted by harvest failure, loss of food stocks and the impossibility to send a household member to work in Russia, all had a significantly worse FCS than others.** Multivariate analysis also indicates that harvest failure and reduced agricultural water were the main determinants for a low FCS in the Rasht valley, while in the Gonchi and Istaravshan region determinants were rather the impossibility to send labour migrants and the loss of employment. In the Khatlon Rain Fed livelihood zone and Southern Khatlon, the loss of agricultural water and failed harvest were highly correlated with poor FCS.

With none of the livelihood zones scoring below 5 for the dietary diversity score[13], and with a national average score of 6, **dietary diversity was not found to be problematic in December 2014.** However, while those households with an acceptable FCS had a balanced diet, fruits and protein-rich products were not consumed at all by households in the poor FCS category, and only very sparsely by those in the borderline FCS category (Figure 11). The prevalence of anemia among women of reproductive age in the poor FCS category is likely to be much higher than the national average of 26 percent.

## Food Stocks and Food Sources

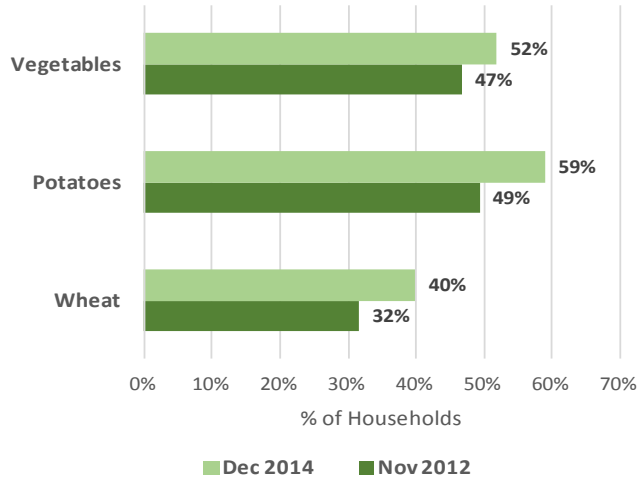
From October to December, most rural households store surplus food, especially wheat flour and potatoes, in anticipation for the winter months when food availability and access is low. Food stocks are a crucial determinant of household food access during the period from November to April. **74 percent of households reported that they currently possessed food stocks, that is less (for all products) than in November 2012** when the country had experienced a good harvest. Food stocks in December 2014 are expected to last for 6 weeks on average, similar to the response in November 2012. In the Khatlon livelihood zones (excluding the mountainous area) and in the Rasht valley, household stocks will reportedly last for only 4 weeks, the lowest average in the country. Stocks of households with a poor FCS are expected to last less than average (5 weeks), yet longer than in November 2012 (3 weeks).




13 The Dietary Diversity Scores indicates the average amount of food groups consumed per day in the past seven days.

**Over 92 percent of households in Rasht cultivated potato crops and over half of these reported that the potato harvest was considerably less than last year,** which explains the high percentage of households with poor and borderline FCS scores in Rasht. A poor wheat harvest was reported by 46 percent of households in the mountainous areas of Khatlon, though here this has not led to exceptionally low food security outcomes. Additionally, 46 and 41 percent of households in Western Pamir and the mountainous areas of Khatlon reported a poorer than usual potato harvest, which is corroborated by data from the State Statistical Agency on agricultural outputs. Countrywide, the FSMS observed that more households were engaged in agricultural production in December 2014 than in November 2012 (figure 13). In general, domestic crop production has a dampening effect on households' vulnerability to market price fluctuations.

Figure 13. Households Producing Crops

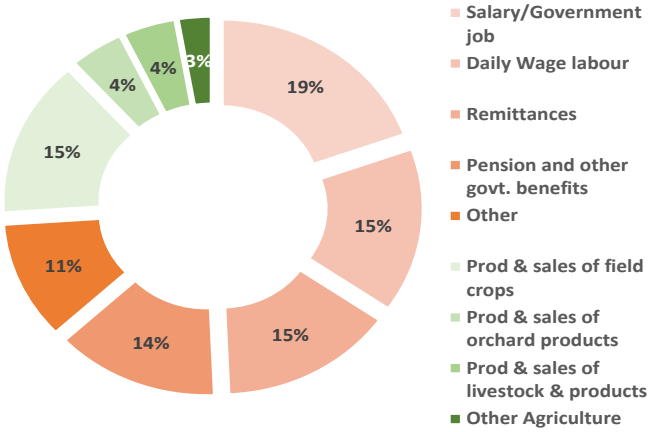



**The percentage of households possessing livestock declined from 84 percent in November 2012 to 79 percent in December 2014.** This level is comparable to the April 2014 figure, yet it is expected to decline throughout the winter lean season as the mortality rate of livestock is higher during winter, and livestock is more often sold or consumed to cope with reduced food availability. The possession of livestock strongly and positively correlated with the overall food security status and the FCS, likely because livestock serves as an important buffer for lower incomes or harvest failures. In this light the decline of livestock between November 2012 and December 2014 is a negative development.

## Expenditures and Income

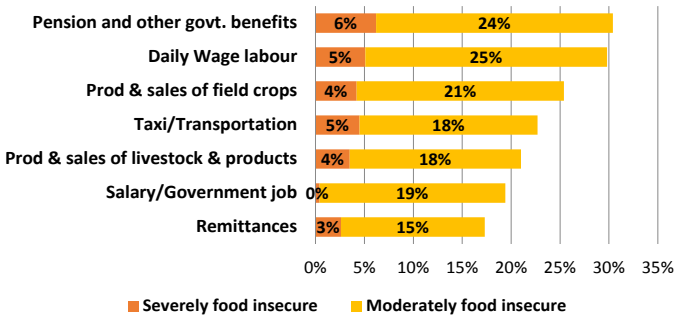
A number of changes were observed in primary income sources between November 2012 and December 2014 (Figure 14): most significantly, remittances are now the main source of income for only 15 percent of households, against 27 percent in November 2012. While remittances were the primary source of income for over half the households in Ghonchi and Western Pamir, this proportion is now down to 21 and 18 percent, respectively. This trend, albeit less pronounced, applies to all livelihood zones except for North Sughd. Incomes related to agriculture, on the other hand, have risen from 21 to 25 percent, with the highest percentage of households depending on agriculture found in the Rasht valley (50 percent) and the mountain areas of Khatlon (30 percent).

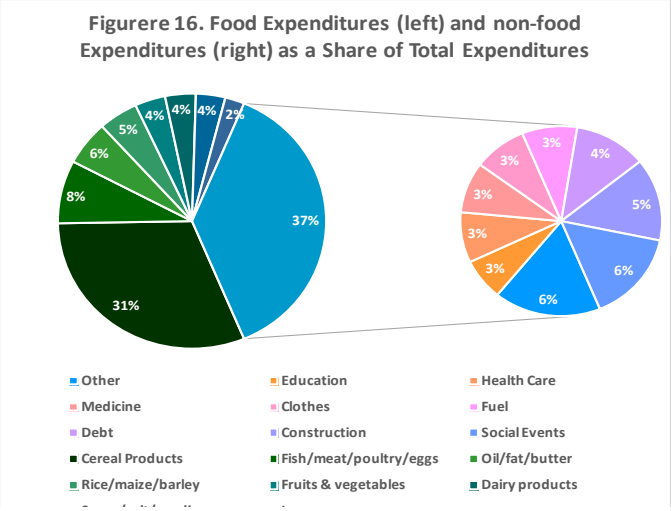
Figure 14. Percentage of Households per Primary Income Type



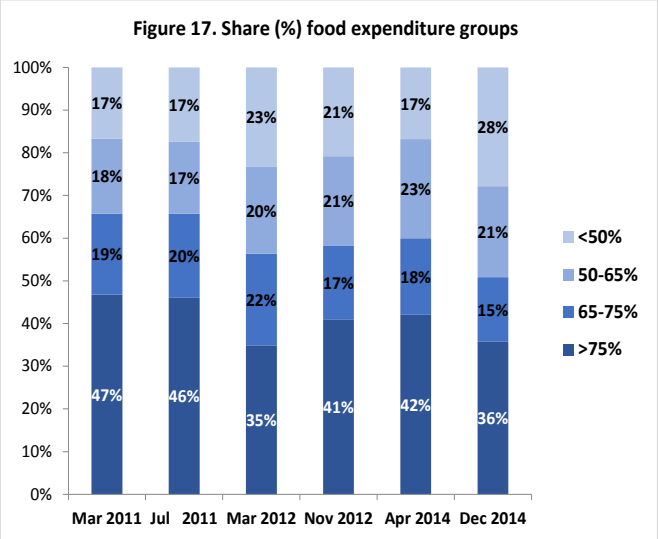

**Households whose primary income comes from pensions and benefits or from daily wage labour are significantly more likely to be severely or moderately food insecure than households with another main source of income (Figure 15).** Households drawing their main income from agricultural activities are closer to Tajikistan's average food security status. On the other hand, small business, regular and government salaries and households relying primarily on remittances are faring better.

Figure 15. Food Security Status of Households per Main Income Source






**The share of food expenditures out of households' total expenditures was found to be similar in December 2014 than in November 2012 (63 percent).** The share of food expenses spent on cereals, the most important staple product, also remained stable at 49 percent.




While 36 percent of households spend more than 75 percent of their income on food on average, it is the case for 50 percent of households with a poor FCS (5 percent of the surveyed population). Regional differences are also significant: 54 percent of the households in the Khatlon Rain Fed area spend over 75 percent of their income on food, down to 21 percent in the Eastern Pamir Plateau. This latter finding is difficult to explain in light of Eastern Pamir scoring lowest of all livelihood zones on the FCS. Households with high share of expenditure on food are likely to be more vulnerable to food insecurity, as they have less of a buffer when confronted with shocks such as high food prices, loss of income opportunity or reduced income. In time of such stress, food insecure households often resort to harmful coping mechanisms such as reducing food quality and quantity, or increasing labour migration (if they can).

## Migration and Remittances

**The number of households having at least one member working elsewhere sending remittances during the previous three months, dropped from 45 percent in November 2012 (and 46 percent in April 2014) to 36 percent in December 2014.** This is consistent with data from Russia's Federal Migration Service reporting a 10 percent reduction in labour migrants in 2014, with the consequences also reported as an economic shock by FSMS respondents. If this drop is already a portent related to the Russian economic slowdown, an even steeper decline can be expected in the next FSMS round in April 2015, as most seasonal labour migrants would normally leave for Russia between February and April.

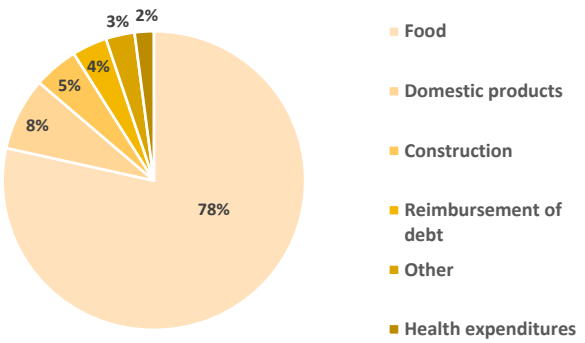
In December 2014, **51 percent of households receiving remittances reported that they had received less remittances** than in the previous year (when asked in April 2014, only 13 percent of households had expected to receive less remittances). Regional disparities, however, are vast: 92 percent of the remittance-receiving households in the mountainous regions of Khatlon received less than the previous year, against 30 percent in the Khatlon Rain Fed area.

In December 2014, **only 61 percent of those households with a labour migrant contributing to the households' income actually received remittances** in the last three months, down from 84 percent in November 2012. These findings indicate a serious deterioration of the situation for labour migration and related income.

**From a food security point of view, households who received remittances in the three months prior to December 2014 had a significantly higher FCS and a better overall food security status (Figure 15). Clearly, the observed decrease in labour** migration opportunities will negatively impact the food security of the rural population in Tajikistan, as has already been the case in similar circumstances in the past. In the present FSMS round, households who reported receiving less or no remittances already scored significantly lower on the FCS than those not affected by a negative change in remittance flows. This is corroborated by the December 2014 finding that food was the primary use of remittances for 78 percent of all surveyed households (See figure 18), and for 100 percent of households in the Rasht valley, which makes this livelihood zone particularly vulnerable to a reduction in labour

migration opportunities.

Figure 18. Households Primary Use of Remittances

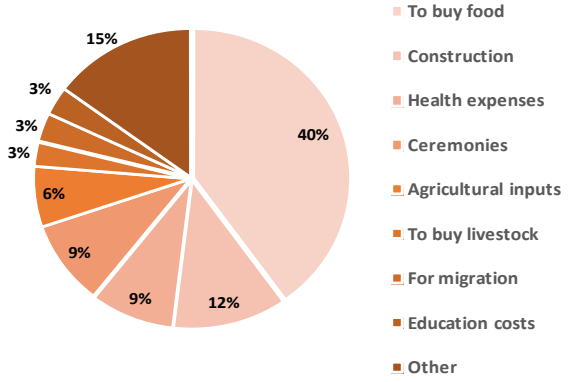



## Indebtedness

**Although fewer households accrued new debt in December 2014 (18 percent of households) than in November 2012 (33 percent) and April 2014 (22 percent),** the average amount of the new debt accrued more than tripled since the November 2012 FSMS, from around 1,200 TJS per household to 4,200 TJS.

**Food was the primary reason to accrue new debt for 40 percent of households in December 2014 (Figure 19)**, with an average indebtedness of 2,500 TJS for these households (lower than the average 4,200 TJS for all newly accrued debt). In April 2014, food was the main reason for contracting new debt for only 30 percent of households: the difference with December 2014 can be explained by the good 2014 harvest (which necessitated to buy less food on credit, even at the end of the lean season in April) and by the necessity in December 2014 to buy more food on credit in anticipation of rising food prices due to a declining currency.

Figure 19. Main Reason for Recently Accrued Debt




The April and December 2014 FSMS show a sharp difference with November 2012, when food was the primary reason to accrue new debt for 66 percent of households. At the time, however, the average indebtedness for these households was approximately 400 TJS, that is more than six times less than the current average (2,500 TJS). This might suggest that the total amount of credit spent on food, rather than having declined, has most likely increased even if fewer households mentioned food as the primary reason for contracting new loans.

In the Rasht valley and Central and Eastern Tajikistan, however, food was still the main reason for contracting new debt for 65 and 68 percent of households, respectively. Despite the high percentage of households in Ghonchi and Istaravshan using consumption based coping strategies and the fact that accrual of debt to purchase food and the CSI strongly correlate, only 14 percent of households in these livelihood zones contracted new debt primarily to purchase food. It cannot be excluded that local cultural factors play a role in the choice of coping mechanisms (e.g. borrowing from friends and relatives vs. buying from shops on credit).

## Outlook

The overall food security situation is not expected to improve between December 2014 and the end of the lean season (May 2015), as food stocks will continue to deplete and food prices will likely rise, reducing food availability and making food less affordable for the most vulnerable households.

Likewise, prices for imported food commodities, including cereals, are generally expected to increase in the coming months due to the inflationary effect of economic sanctions and trade bans imposed on one another by the European Union and the Russian Federation. Regional food prices might rise further as a consequence of Russia imposing export bans or raising export taxes as a means to counter domestic inflation. The continuing decline of the value of the TJS against the USD will also likely impact negatively prices of imported food commodities. The only mitigating factor might be a decrease in fuel prices when the expected renewal of Tajikistan's accord with the Russian Federation on tax-free oil imports will come into effect.

Tajikistan's overall economic situation, negatively impacted by the Russian economic slowdown and the severe reduction in income expected from a decline in remittances, will also likely aggravate an already fragile food security situation in the coming months. Attention should be given to livelihood zones already showing signs of serious vulnerability early in the lean season, as evidenced in the present report and in the Food Security Situation Overview (see next page).

# Food Security Situation Overview

| Food Security Zones | Current status | FS Trend compared to November 2012 | 3 months outlook | 6 months outlook |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Livelihood Zone 1: Eastern Pamir Plateau Livestock Zone | High Food Prices. Drop of remittances. High level of life stock diseases. | ↑ | → | ↑ |
| Livelihood Zone 2: Western Pamir Valley Migratory Work Zone | High Food Prices. Poor harvest (potato). High food expenditures. | → | → | ↑ |
| Livelihood Zone 3: Western Pamir Irrigated Agriculture Zone | Food security remained stable. | ↑ | → | ↑ |
| Livelihood Zone 4: Rasht Valley Irrigated Potato Zone | High Food Prices. High return of labour migrants and drop of remittances. Poor harvest (potato). High level of crop pests and diseases. Low food stocks. | ↓ | ↓ | → |
| Livelihood Zone 5: Khatlon Mountain Agro-Pastoral Zone | High Food Prices. Poor harvest (wheat and potato). Loss of food stocks. Drop of remittances. High food expenditures. | ↑ | → | ↑ |
| Livelihood Zone 6: Southern Khatlon Cotton, Vegetable and Wheat Zone | High Food Prices. Low food stocks. Drop of remittances. | → | ↓ | ↑ |
| Livelihood Zone 7: Khatlon Rain fed Wheat and Livestock Zone | Low food stocks. High food expenditures. | ↑ | ↓ | ↑ |
| Livelihood Zone 8: Central and Eastern Tajikistan Agro-Industrial Zone | High Food Prices. | ↑ | → | ↑ |
| Livelihood Zone 9: Eastern and Central Zeravshan Valley Agro-pastoral Zone | High Food Prices. Poor harvest (potato). High return of labour migrants. | ↑ | → | ↑ |
| Livelihood Zone 10: Panjakent Rice, Fruit, and Vegetable Zone | High Food Prices. Landslides and floodings. High food expenditures | → | → | ↑ |
| Livelihood Zone 11: Ghonchi and Istaravshan Rainfed Cereal, Fruit, and Vegetable Zone | High Food Prices. High return of labour migrants. Loss of food stocks. | ↓ | ↓ | → |
| Livelihood Zone 12: North Sughd Agro-Industrial Zone | High Food Prices | ↓ | ↓ | → |
| Livelihood Zone 13: Khatlon Agro-industrial Peri-urban Zone | High Food Prices. Low and loss of food stocks. Drop of remittances. | → | ↓ | ↑ |

| Trend | Current food security status |
|---|---|
| → - No changes | Food secure |
| ↑ - Improvement | Mildly food insecure |
| ↓ - Deterioration | Moderately food insecure |

The FSMS provides reliable data at the household level 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 in each of the 13 livelihood zones. In total 1,300 households in 65 sites are interviewed. The information represents a trend and cannot be projected at population level.

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