



bulletin

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 mid-April 2014.

Highlights

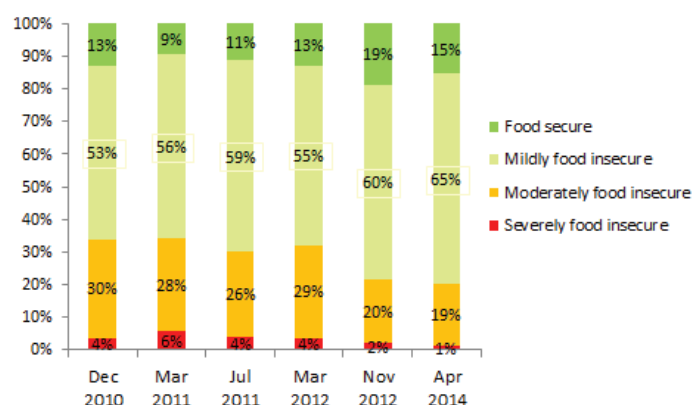
- Food Security during the 2013-14 winter and in the lean period that followed benefitted from Tajikistan's second consecutive above-average wheat harvest in 2013, combined with a favourable wheat harvest in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan's main source of imports for this staple crop. According to the country's State Statistics Agency, the production of cereals in 2013 was equal to 1.4 million tons, up 12 percent against the previous year¹. Many households also relied on remittances to increase their purchasing power and to improve their food consumption.

- Despite these good harvests and a decrease in prices which began in July 2013, wheat flour prices remain 28 percent higher than their 2008-12 average and represent an obstacle to food security for many households.

- As a result, **an estimated 20 percent of rural households countrywide are found to be food insecure, of which 19 percent moderately and one percent severely food insecure²**, despite steady and positive changes in the country's economy and an improvement in food security trends (Figure 1).

- These findings show an improvement against the same period in 2012, where moderate/severe

Figure 1. Food security trend over time (% of households)



levels of food insecurity affected 33 percent of rural households. Mildly food insecure households, however, now 65 percent of households (against 55 percent in 2012) are still at greater risk in the event of natural or economic shocks. Only 15 percent of rural households were found to be food secure - a marginal improvement on the March 2012 finding (13 percent).

- Food insecurity still affects certain areas more than others. **The Southern Khatlon (Livelihood Zone 6), the Rasht Valley (Livelihood Zone 4), the Khatlon Mountain Agro-pastoral (Livelihood Zone 5) and the Western Panjakent (Livelihood Zone 10)** are areas with the highest proportion of severely and moderately food insecure households.

¹ Food Security and Poverty Bulletin, №4 – 2013, State Statistics Agency of the Republic of Tajikistan, p. 142

² Food insecurity is determined by crosstabulation of average of three indicators: current consumption status, percent of food expenditure and livelihood coping/asset depletion strategies used by households

Context

Despite a steady recovery from the 2008-09 financial crisis (Tajikistan's GDP grew by 7.4 percent in 2013¹), the country's agriculture sector grew at a slower pace (3.9 percent²), and Tajikistan made little progress on the Global Hunger Index (GHI), from 19.0 in 1995 down to 16.3 in 2013, both index values characterizing a serious hunger level³.

Reliance on food imports and external market variations, vulnerability to natural disasters, limited arable land, and a landlocked situation still contribute to make Tajikistan one of the poorest countries in Central Asia, heavily impacted by global commodity price fluctuations, policy decisions of its trade partners and other external factors.

Remittances from labour migrants have been one of the key contributors to Tajikistan's economic growth and poverty reduction. Record high remittance inflows in 2013, estimated at about US\$4.1 billion (almost 49 percent of GDP) mitigated the negative impact of declining exports (down 14.4 percent against 2012). According to the World Bank, Tajikistan remains by far the most remittance-dependent country in the world⁴.

Such dependency represents a high risk for GDP growth, livelihoods and food security, especially if the 5.3 percent drop in remittance inflows observed in the first quarter of 2014⁵ were to be confirmed as a trend, or indeed if a sudden economic or political downturn. That were to result in a much sharper reduction in income – with immediate and direct impact on households' purchasing power.

According to FAO/MOA Crop Evaluation Assessment, the total cereal deficit in the country was close to one million tons for the crop year 2013. Tajikistan continues to import 50 percent of the wheat it consumes from Kazakhstan, which makes the country vulnerable to price fluctuations in Kazakhstan and on the international market. While the Government is trying to address this by diversifying imports, the 2012 drought in Kazakhstan pushed up wheat prices; although prices stabilized and even decreased in 2013 following a good harvest in Tajikistan and Kazakhstan, they still remain 28 percent higher than the 2008-2012 average

¹The Socio-Economic Situation in Tajikistan for January-December 2013, State Statistics Agency of the Republic of Tajikistan, p. 8

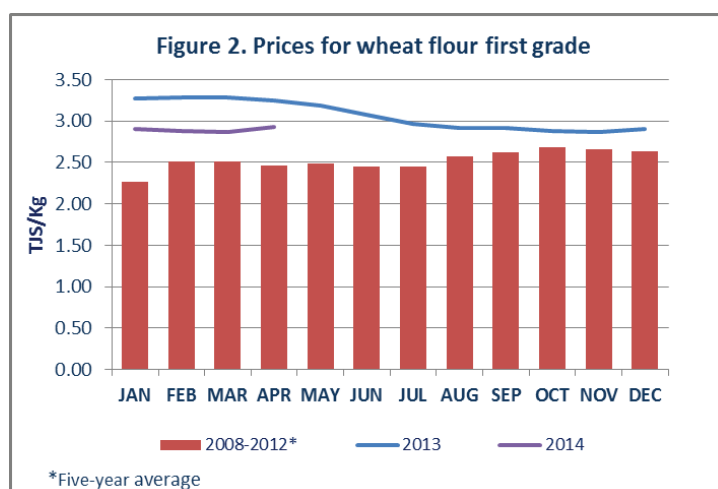
²Ibid, p. 9 & 15

³Global Hunger Index Report 2013, IFPRI

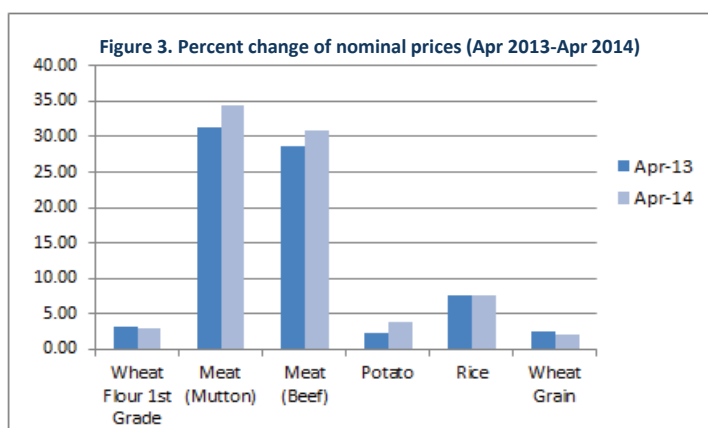
⁴The Socio-Economic Situation in Tajikistan for January-December 2013, State Statistics Agency of the Republic of Tajikistan, p. 6

⁵According to Russia's Central Bank, money sent home by Tajik migrant workers was down from USD 679.7 million in the first quarter of 2013 to USD 644.0 million in the first quarter of 2014.

(Figure 2). Taking into consideration that wheat flour provides nearly 40 percent of the dietary energy supply of the average person, the negative impact of the price rise on nutrition is significant.



The average price of potatoes, the other staple food in the Tajik diet, increased significantly during the first quarter of 2014 due to reduced imports from Pakistan, likely associated with severe winter weather and political instability in Afghanistan, decreased availability in local and regional markets. Potatoes prices have increased by 70 percent compared to April 2013 levels and remain at most elevated levels in Dushanbe (Figure 3).



Source: WFP CO, Tajikistan

Malnutrition remains an issue in Tajikistan, with acute malnutrition (wasting) affecting 10 percent of children under five, including four percent severely wasted. Chronic malnutrition (stunting) has not changed significantly since the last nationwide survey in 2005, with a prevalence of 26.0 percent. Anemia also represents a public health problem, with a prevalence of 24.2 percent amongst women of reproductive age and of 28.8 percent of children 6-59 months⁶.

⁶2012 Tajikistan Demographic and Health Survey (DHS)

Exposure to economic and natural shocks¹

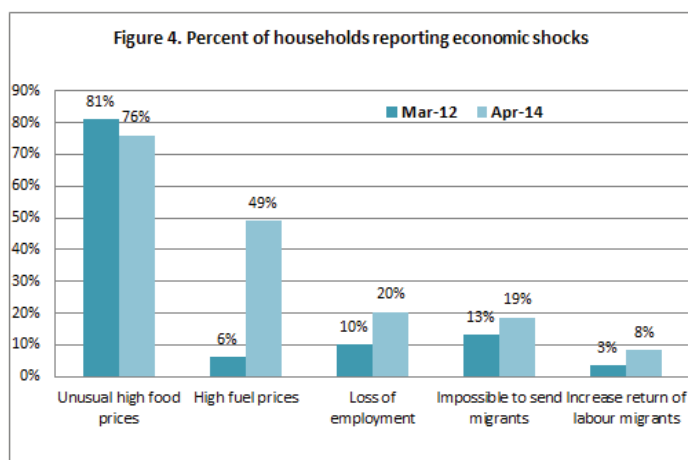
Tajikistan is highly susceptible to frequent natural disasters, such as floods, mudslides, frost and droughts and also remains vulnerable to economic shocks, such as price increases, seasonal unemployment, variation in remittances, etc. These shocks exacerbate the already precarious living conditions of the population, destroying crops, livelihoods and the precarious infrastructure.

Around 90 percent of the respondents of this survey reported they had faced various types of shocks during the three months preceding the assessment and 40 percent mentioned that these shocks had had an adverse impact on their household's overall food consumption.

High food prices were noted by most households (76 percent) as one of the difficulties faced during the three months preceding the survey (Figure 4). This is only slightly lower compared to March 2012, when high food prices were reported by 80 percent of households. This issue has been most frequently noted by households in zones where most of the food is purchased from markets, such as Western Pamir Migratory, Khatlon Mountain Agro-pastoral and Eastern and Central Zeravshan Valley Zones.

High fuel prices were reported as a shock within three months before the survey by 49 percent of households. Two years ago, in March 2012 only 6 percent of respondents considered high fuel prices as a shock affecting the households' food security. The reason could be that in April demand for fuel increases due to expansion of agricultural work in the fields.

Reduced drinking water was reported by nearly 30 percent of the respondents.



The scarcity of irrigation water still remains among the top concerns for households in rural areas, particularly those residing in zones with agricultural production as a main livelihood. **Twenty nine percent of households reported shortage of agricultural water as a main shock.**

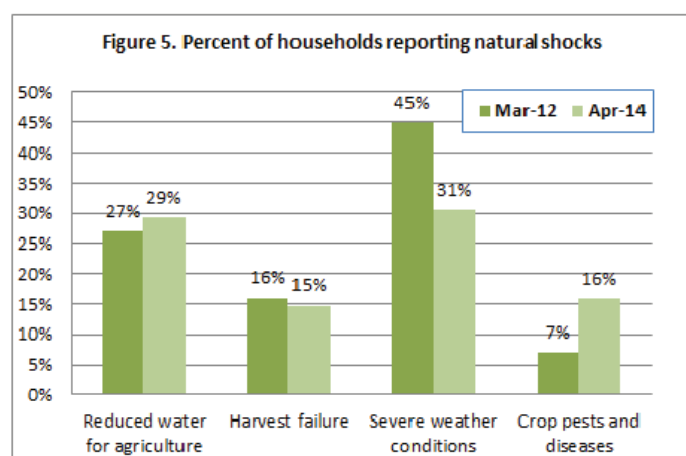
Loss of employment or reduced salary of the breadwinners affected around 20 percent of households, which is much higher than in March 2012, when only 10 percent reported facing this difficulty.

Serious illness or accident of a working household member affected 20 percent of households compared to 17 percent in March and 5 percent in November 2012.

More unusual is the proportion of households reporting **difficulties in sending migrants to Russia (19 percent of households) in the past three months.** This particular difficulty could have serious repercussions on households' ability to access food in the months to come, especially in zones when the harvest is collected late summer. The higher travel fares to Russia and the difficulties to finance travel through credit from banks or relatives partly explain this situation.

The other shock which were reported more frequently was increased level of migrants return from Russia. Eight percent considered it as a main pre-occupation compared to 3 percent in March 2012.

Shocks that were less frequently reported compared to two years ago are severe weather conditions and harvest failure (Figure 5). This could be due the hard weather conditions of 2012 resulting in lower agricultural harvests in many areas country-wide, however, a general favorable weather of 2013-2014 seasons with above average agricultural crops.



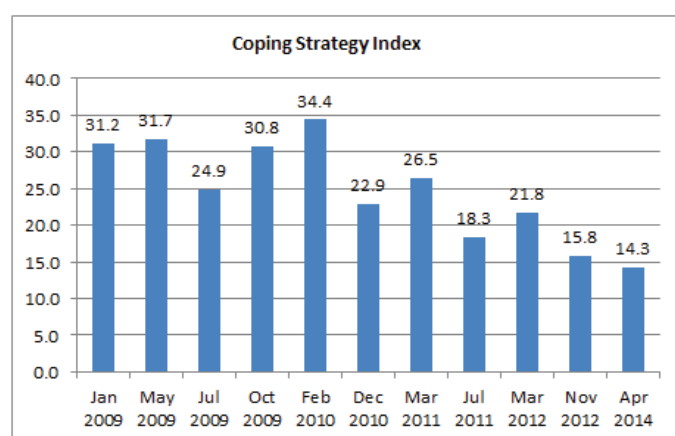
¹ Shocks are defined by an event that has a negative impact on food security and nutrition. Shocks can be natural or caused by human action

The overall economic situation of 41 percent of the households did not change significantly compared with same period of 2013. Twenty eight percent of respondents mentioned the situation improved slightly, while other 22 percent believe the family's wellbeing slightly worsened. The deterioration expressed more by respondents in Western Panjakent (35 percent), Ghonchi and Istaravshan and North Sughd Agro-industrial (33 percent and 31 percent respectively) and Southern Khatlon (30 percent) Zones.

Coping strategies

Households use coping strategies to mitigate the impact of shocks, impacting their food security. The frequency and type of coping strategies indicate the level of stress caused by various shocks.

Overall, households are less stressed in April 2014 compared to the 2012 spring season. Overall, in comparison with the same period of 2012 and November 2012, the reduced coping strategy index¹, which is based on five food consumption related strategies, has improved, meaning that on average these coping strategies are applied by fewer households (Figure 6). The highest level of stress is observed in Southern Khatlon (30 percent), Western Panjakent (21 percent) and Khatlon Mountain Agro-pastoral (20 percent) Zones.

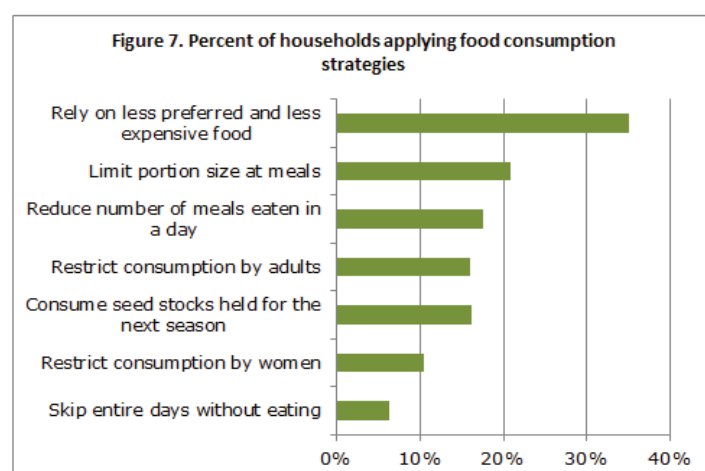


Most common consumption-based strategies applied are the reliance on less preferred and lower quality food types, limiting portions of meal, followed by reducing number of meals eaten in a day (Figure 7).

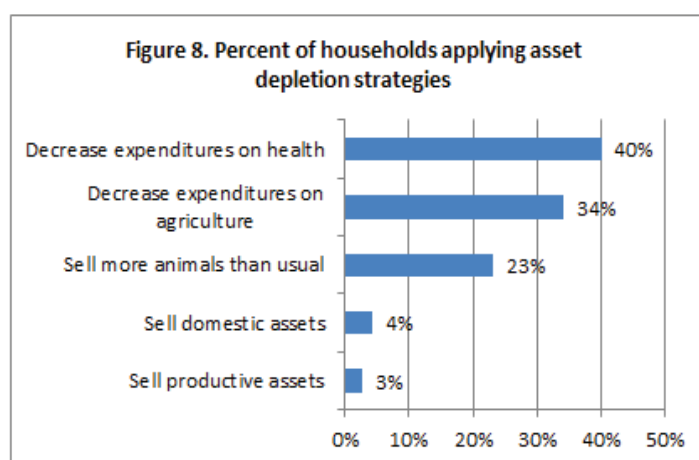
More than third of interviewed households continue to apply asset conservation strategies such as **reducing expenditure on health care, and**

¹ The Reduced Coping Strategy Index takes into account the frequency of use of the five coping mechanisms: reliance on less preferred and less expensive food, purchase of food on credit, borrowing food and relying on support from family or friends

decreasing investments in agriculture, including expenditures for fertilizer, pesticide and veterinary care (Figure 8).



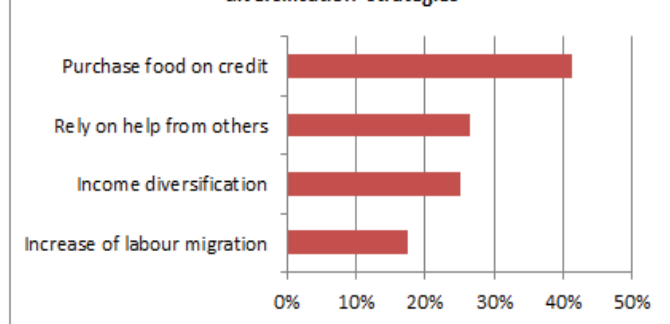
Although the proportion of using this strategies decreased compared to the same season of 2012, still it remains high and entail risks for the health risks and nutritional status of the most vulnerable groups, particularly children, pregnant women and the elderly in the short- and medium-term and a negative impact on agricultural productivity. Households in Eastern Pamir, Khatlon Mountain Agro-pastoral, Southern Khatlon and Western Panjakent Zones have used these strategies more frequently.



Strategies that have remained high are **purchase food on credit (42 percent), incurring debts (26 percent) and looking for alternative employment (25 percent)**.

Eighteen percent of households have indicated that in comparison to previous years the number of members migrating out of the village in search of work increased (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Percent of households applying livelihood diversification strategies



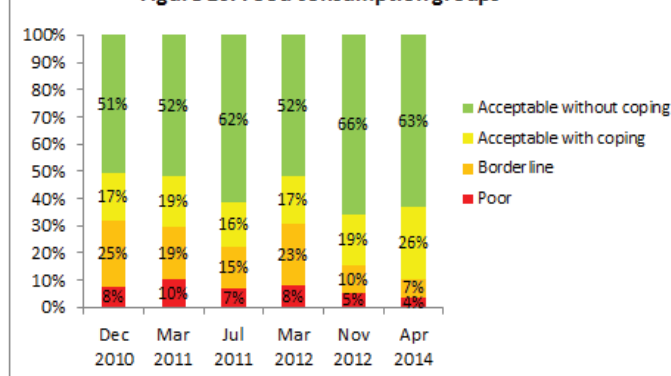
Food consumption and dietary diversity

Food consumption and dietary diversity usually decrease during the winter and early spring because households run out of stocks from their own production and the range of food available on markets is limited or food prices are higher compared to other seasons.

This year the food consumption considerably improved compared to same period of 2012 (Figure 10). The number of households with poor and borderline food consumption decreased from 31 percent to 11 percent country-wide.

This improvement was primarily a result of above average harvest in 2013, lower food and fuel prices and increase in remittances received by households from the family members working abroad during this year, allowing households to stockpile for the lean period.

Figure 10. Food consumption groups



However, there are a number of zones, with high number of households with poor and borderline food consumption. This includes Rasht Valley (34 percent), Eastern Pamir (21 percent), Southern Khatlon (18 percent) and Khatlon Wheat and Livestock (16 percent) Zones.

Low incomes, high share of expenditure on food and lack of productive asset and resources (land, livestock, skills) do not enable the most vulnerable to maintain an adequate frequency and diversity of food intake, potentially putting the health and nutritional status of the most vulnerable households members in jeopardy, especially through micronutrients deficit.

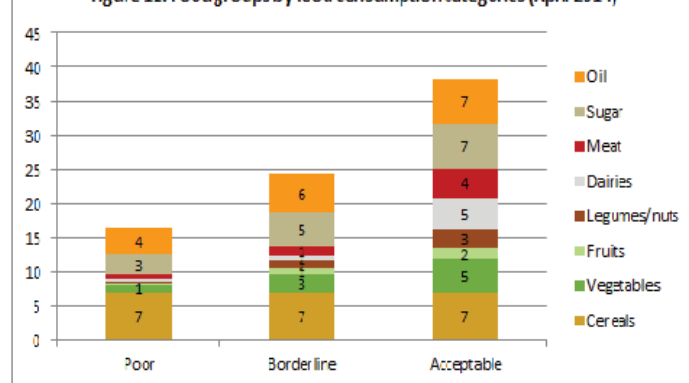
It is worth to mention that **although the number of families with poor and borderline food consumption decreased, there is an increase observed in number of households who have an acceptable food consumption, but still are "at risk", because they rely on food consumption-based coping strategies.** In the event of any shocks or constricted resources, they may reduce consumption of better quality foods, thus falling into the borderline category food consumption patterns.

Households in the "acceptable" food group category eat more vegetables and fruits and food rich of proteins, including meat for 4 days in the week preceding the survey.

Nonetheless, a low dietary diversity remained a key problem for families of poor and borderline category which was exclusively based on staples and oils (consumed 4-6 days a week) with some sugar (3-5 days a week) (Figure 11). Consumption of animal and vegetable proteins was essentially absent.

This entails serious risks of malnutrition and diseases if continued in the medium and longer term, especially for young children, pregnant and lactating women, and the elderly.

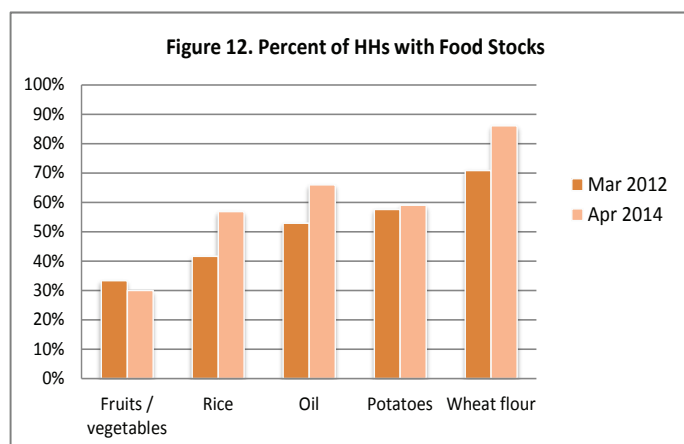
Figure 11. Food groups by food consumption categories (April 2014)



Food sources and food stocks

Rural households build their stocks for the winter in the fall and food stocks are crucial before the start of the new harvesting season. Most households throughout the country have sufficient access to sta

ple foods, particularly wheat and wheat flour, mainly from the above-average harvest in 2013, which improved the capacity of households to build sufficient stocks for the current year. Continuous wheat and wheat flour importation from Kazakhstan also helped households to procure and stockpile for the lean period, lasting till May-June, with the remittances received in the fall.



Households were using their stocks during the lean season and in April **over 61 percent of households interviewed reported that they had food stocks kept in the house and over 86 percent having stocks of wheat flour available.**

Wheat and wheat flour stocks can meet household consumption needs for a month. The duration has increased from three weeks in March 2012 to four weeks in April 2014. Potato and oil reserves will last for nearly 3 weeks. This means most rural households have enough stocks till the harvest begins.

However, the situation is not the same for the families living in the areas, where the harvesting season starts in July-August and these households have to look for the income opportunities to fill the gap from the markets.

Livestock and livestock production remain significant for rural livelihoods and food security. **About 78 percent of the interviewed households owned livestock in April 2012**, similar to the proportion as in previous rounds. The highest number of cattle and sheep/goats is kept by households in Zone 1 and poultry in Zones 7 and Zone 6. Country-wide, households in average own more than 2 cattle and over 9 sheep/goats - higher than in March 2012, when respondents reportedly had 8 sheep/goats.

This confirms the Governments' reports on overall increase in number of livestock for past years country-wide, reaching 2.1 billion of cattle and 5.1 billion sheep and goats by end of April 2014.

Income and expenditures

Compared to the same season of 2012, the importance of income activities for households has remained fairly stable in many areas. However, the source of income is differing slightly in some locations, depending on main livelihoods. In general, **the most frequently reported income, taking multiple responses into account, is (i) daily wage labor (20 percent), (ii) salaries received from Government jobs (17%), followed by remittances (14 percent) and pensions and other benefits (14 percent).** Other 13 percent of rural households are maintaining their livelihoods through production and sale of field crops.

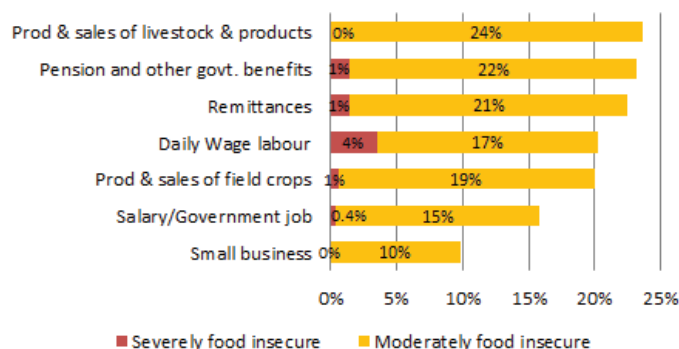
In this round the proportion of households mentioning remittances as a main source of income has decreased compared to the same season of 2012. In April 2014, daily wage labour rose to higher levels, possibly due to more opportunities opened for the past years, particularly in construction field, in Dushanbe and the regional centers. The number of people migrating internally also show increase, when people after returning from Russia with gained skills work in state or privately owned constructions. The households mentioning casual labor as a source of income is particularly high in Ghonchi and Istaravshan (47 percent), North Sughd, Khatlon Wheat and Livestock (28 percent) and Eastern and Central Zeravshan (26 percent) Zones. The seasonal migration to Russia starting from the month of April onwards may reduce the share of casual labour job for many families.

One-third of all respondents in Eastern Pamir and Central and Eastern Tajikistan Agro-industrial and 31 percent in Western Pamir Migratory reported that salaries received from the Governmental jobs were their main source of income.

It should be noted that one of the positive factors contributing to income received from the Government jobs and pensions was an increase in wages for teachers, doctors and health workers, etc. as well as in pensions and social benefits in 2012 and in 2013. The minimum salary in Tajikistan equal to TJS80.00 in 2011, was increased to TJS200.00 in September 01, 2012 and established at TJS250.00 as of September 01, 2013.

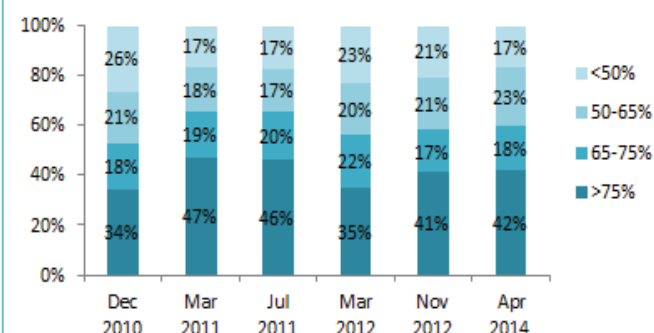
Households relying on pensions and daily wage labour as their main income activity are among the worse-off in terms of food security, while households that rely on income from small business are among the better off (Figure 13).

Figure 13 : Food security status of hh with different main income source



On average, households spent 68 percent of their income to satisfy their food requirements over the month preceding the survey, compared to 56 percent in March and 63 percent in November 2012 (Figure 14). Proportions remained particularly high in remote areas- Western Pamir Migratory (78 percent) and Western Pamir Irrigated Agriculture (76 percent) which are heavily dependent on markets with higher food prices due to additional transportation expenses during cold season. Around half of food expenditure is spent on cereals (49 percent); in March 2012 this proportion was 51 percent.

Figure 14. Share (%) food expenditure groups



In terms of absolute figures, food expenditure continued increasing compared to previous rounds. Overall, these findings point towards increased cash availability in rural communities, which could be related to rise in Government salaries, pensions and increased remittances. The share of households' expenditure on fuel decreased from nearly 7 percent in March 2012 to 5 percent in this round because of 21 percent decrease in fuel prices (from TJS6.46 per liter to TJS5.10 per liter).

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 times of such

stress, food insecure households often resort to harmful coping mechanisms such as reducing food quality and quantity, increasing labour migration, etc. High food prices (although stabilized, but still remain in high levels) have impact on the household purchasing power and food security, especially at the level of those spending main part of the income on food.

Migration and remittances

A large outflow of migrant labour from both rural and urban areas continued in 2013, and beginning of 2014, especially to Russia, due to poor employment opportunities in Tajikistan and work prospects in Russia. Significant wage differential between Russian and Tajik labor markets is also an important determinant of labor migration. Labour migration is one of the major livelihood strategies in the context of the country and a key factor for food security for many rural households and a main source of income for many families to meet their daily basic needs.

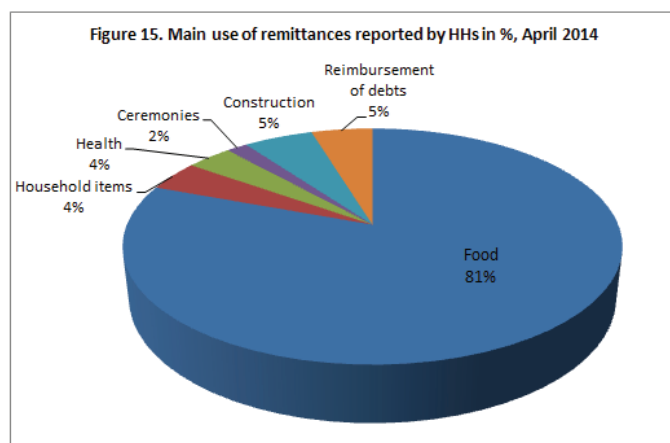
Nearly 46 percent of households reported to have at least one family member labour migrant. The overwhelming majority are in Russia. The highest proportions of households with labour migrants were found in livelihood Western Pamir Irrigated Agriculture and Khatlon Peri-Urban Zones where 70 percent and 64 percent of the interviewed households said they had a family member out of the location for work, within or out of Tajikistan.

From households having a labor migrant, twenty-five percent reported that they received regular remittances over the past three months. As mentioned earlier, a large number of households this round have reported difficulties to send migrants to Russia.

Out of the household with labour migrants, above 34 percent mentioned they received remittances less often and the same number confirmed the amount of money they received was smaller than in same period of the last year. This confirms the mentioned information from the Russia's Central Bank on decrease of levels of remittances to Tajikistan recorded during the first quarter of 2014.

Remittances remain essential for the food security of the families receiving them: **81 percent of the funds received used by households to acquire food** (Figure 15). This confirms the idea that remittances are essential for building stocks before and during the lean season, especially at a time when food is becoming more expensive. This additional influx of money might have somehow helped

ease the effects of the high food prices. 5 percent of households reported that they used money from abroad for construction purposes. Another 5 percent of received funds used for reimbursement of debts accrued by the households.

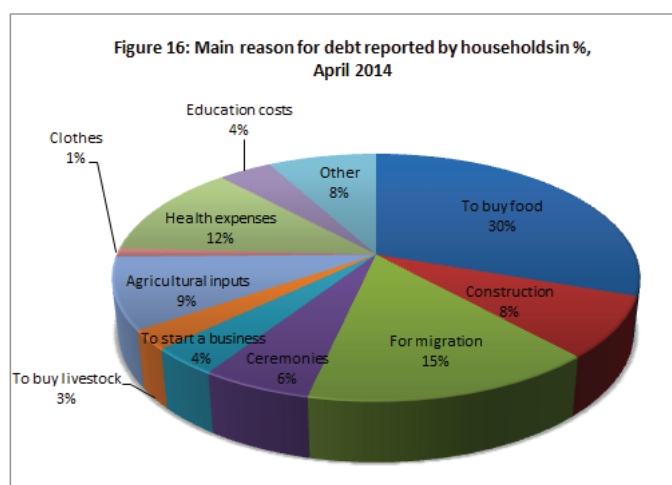


Despite the important role that remittances play in mitigating household food insecurity, there is increasing concern about the social and economic costs for the families too, associated with the increasing reliance on cross-border labour migration (a special survey should be conducted to measure the affects).

Indebtedness

Around 22 percent of households interviewed, accrued new debts in the past three months, which is 16 percent less than in March 2012. By far, the most important reason for taking out new debts was to buy food, followed by payment of tickets for migration and to cover health expenses.

Overall, 30 percent of all households used the borrowed money to purchase food over the past three months (Figure 16).



It is higher in comparison with 2 years ago, when the proportion was 20 percent. Other 15 percent of interviewed households accrued debt for migration out of the country, which is 6 percent more than in the same season of 2012. This could be due to increase of number of people from leaving to Russia in search of better opportunities and income. In major cases, households initially purchase food through credit until remittances are received to pay off.

Outlook for the coming six months (June -November 2014)

The overall food security situation in most parts of the country is expected to improve during the next six months.

Food availability and access to food is expected to improve as spring rains in February-May 2014 have been adequate, leading to good prospects for the agricultural crops, cereals, fruits and vegetables. The seasonal availability of pasture will also lead to improvement in livestock productivity and value, better food consumption pattern for real households.

During summer and fall seasons, many alternative sources of food and income will be available, which includes the resumption of seasonal agricultural labor opportunities, reaching its peak during the harvest, from May to September, construction works, casual labor opportunities, particularly in Dushanbe and regional and district centers, migration, etc.

Remittances continue to remain critical for households' food security and inflow of remittances is likely to be sustained within the rest of the year, improving purchasing power of rural families. However, the process of inflow and labor migration trends should be monitored closely due to possible changes in economic prospects of Russia.

Prices for wheat grain and locally produced flour should slightly decrease in the coming months following the start of country's wheat harvesting period.

The outcome of the agricultural campaign for this year is still unknown for the country and for Kazakhstan, the main exporter of wheat grain and wheat flour to Tajikistan. However, consistent precipitation during March and April in Tajikistan was critical for successful rainfed crop planting and development and it is expected that the country will benefit from the third consecutive above-average wheat harvest, favoring price stability and household availability of this staple crop.

Food Security Situation Overview

| Food Security Zones | Current status/action points | FS Trend compared to March 2012 | 3 months outlook | 6 months outlook |
|---|---|---------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Livelihood Zone 1: Eastern Pamir Plateau Livestock Zone | High percentage of households with poor and borderline food consumption. Low food stocks. | ↓ | → | → |
| Livelihood Zone 2: Western Pamir Valley Migratory Work Zone | High percent of food expenditure. | → | → | ↑ |
| Livelihood Zone 3: Western Pamir Irrigated Agriculture Zone | High percent of food expenditure. | → | → | ↑ |
| Livelihood Zone 4: Rasht Valley Irrigated Potato Zone | High percentage of households with poor and borderline food consumption. Low food stocks. | ↑ | → | ↑ |
| Livelihood Zone 5: Khatlon Mountain Agro-Pastoral Zone | High percent of food expenditure. High use of coping strategies. May deteriorate in remote areas due to seasonal rains, causing localized natural disasters. | → | → | ↑ |
| Livelihood Zone 6: Southern Khatlon Cotton, Vegetable and Wheat Zone | High percentage of households with poor and borderline food consumption. High use of coping strategies. High percent of food expenditure. Low food stocks. | ↓ | → | ↑ |
| Livelihood Zone 7: Khatlon Rain fed Wheat and Livestock Zone | High percentage of households with poor and borderline food consumption. High use of coping strategies. Low food stocks. | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ |
| Livelihood Zone 8: Central and Eastern Tajikistan Agro-Industrial Zone | The food security situation remains stable. | → | ↑ | ↑ |
| Livelihood Zone 9: Eastern and Central Zeravshan Valley Agro-pastoral Zone | High use of coping strategies. The food security situation remains stable. | ↑ | → | ↑ |
| Livelihood Zone 10: Panjakent Rice, Fruit, and Vegetable Zone | High percent of food expenditure. Low food stocks. High use of coping strategies. May deteriorate in remote areas due to seasonal rains, causing localized natural disasters. | ↓ | ↓ | ↑ |
| Livelihood Zone 11: Ghonchi and Istaravshan Rainfed Cereal, Fruit, and Vegetable Zone | The food security situation remains stable. | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ |
| Livelihood Zone 12: North Sughd Agro-Industrial Zone | The food security situation remains stable. | ↑ | → | ↑ |
| Livelihood Zone 13: Khatlon Agro-industrial Peri-urban Zone | Low food stocks. High use of coping strategies. | → | ↑ | ↑ |

Trend

→ - No changes

↑ - Improvement

↓ - Deterioration

Current food security status

Food secure

Mildly food insecure

Moderately food insecure

Severely 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 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.

For further information and data on food security please contact Saidamon Bodamaev, WFP Tajikistan Saidamon.Bodamaev@wfp.org or tajikistan.foodsecuritycluster@wfp.org

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