



Blue Nile, Sudan

Food Security Monitoring, December 2015



World Food Programme

Executive Summary

- Food security in November 2015 had improved compared to November 2014 in the three localities with the highest level of food insecurity: Geissan, Kurmuk and Rosseris. Two thirds or more of households in all localities were food secure. The improvement could be attributed to the lasting effects of the very good 2014/15 agricultural season, largely moderate food price levels, and ongoing food assistance. Despite improvements, concerns remains that the poor 2015/16 season could prolong and deepen the upcoming lean season.
- Households who self-identified as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and those who self-identified as residents exhibited similar levels of food security. The sample of returnees was too small to generate reliable statistics; however, results suggested that this group may have been far less food secure.
- Household food consumption among sampled households had improved compared to November 2014 and was largely acceptable, although approximately one fourth of households in Geissan and Kurmuk were unable to sustain acceptable levels of food consumption.
- Sorghum prices were lower than at the same time last year, as a result of high supply from the carryover stocks of cereals from the exceptional production in the 2014/15 season. Prices had decreased compared to the previous month, October, which was typical in the pre-harvest period. However, given the lacklustre outlook for the 2015/16 season, prices may start to increase earlier than during a typical year.
- A convergence to the mean was observed for household purchasing power, with poorer localities showing an improvement compared to the same time last year, and localities with stronger purchasing power exhibiting a deterioration. Approximately one third of households were unable to afford the local food basket.
- As in previous rounds of food security monitoring, crop production was the main livelihood activity among sample households, followed by agricultural wage labour. Together they account for more than 70 percent of households.

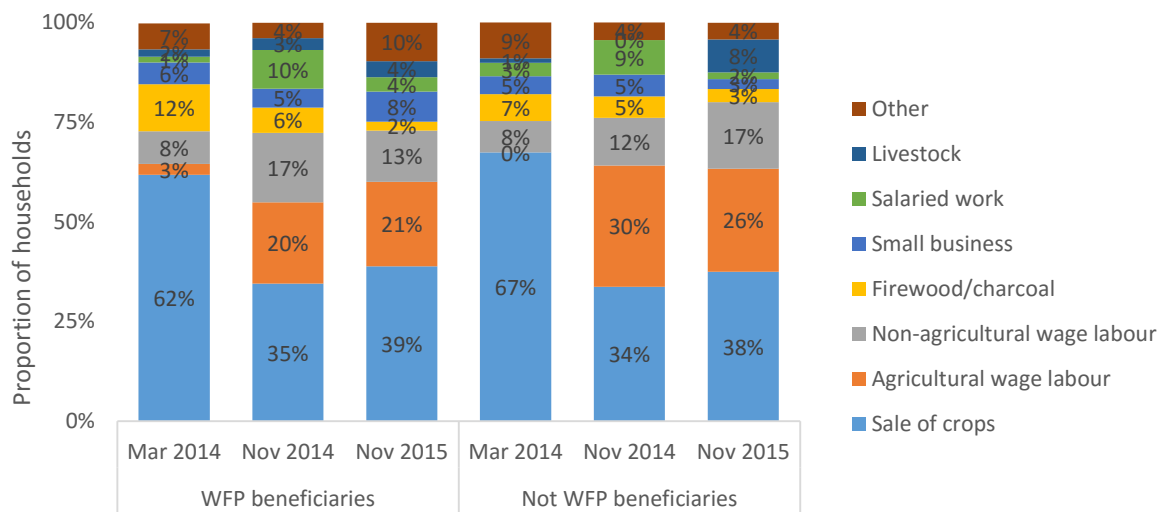
A Description of the Sample

Data collection for round three of the Blue Nile state Food Security Monitoring System was carried out in November 2015, which was the beginning of the harvest season. A total of 600 households distributed across 25 sentinel sites were surveyed in Blue Nile state. One of the planned sentinel sites was not assessed due to inaccessibility. A significant increase in the percentage of residents were observed in this sample compared to the previous round of food security monitoring. There were very few who identified as returnees compared to results of same time last year, and these were mostly in Bau locality and only a few in the other four assessed localities. Households in the Tadamon sample were mostly residents. The sample in Geissan and Rosseris had a higher percentage of IDPs, but still smaller than last year. Overall, the sample captured more residents than IDPs.

Livelihoods

In November 2015, the primary livelihood activity for sample households was sale of crops. The proportion of households who depended on sale of crops were largely unchanged compared to the same time last year, both among household who received food assistance and among those that did not. Crop production was followed in importance by agricultural wage labour, non-agricultural wage labour, and small business. The livelihood profile of assisted and non-assisted households was similar, suggesting that many displaced households still were able to access traditional livelihood strategies.

FIGURE 1: MAIN LIVELIHOOD



Seventy percent of sampled households in Bau locality had access to safe water sources, compared to only 10 percent of households in Tadamon locality. Housing was mostly made from thatch, with some households, mainly in Geissan locality, living in mud/mud brick or stone houses.

Markets and Prices

In November 2015, sorghum prices were below what they were at the same time last year due to high supply from carryover stock of cereals from the exceptional production in the 2014/15 season. The decreasing trend followed approximately a normal seasonal pattern whereby prices tend to decrease during the pre-harvest season.

FIGURE 2: SORGHUM PRICES IN DAMAZINE MARKET

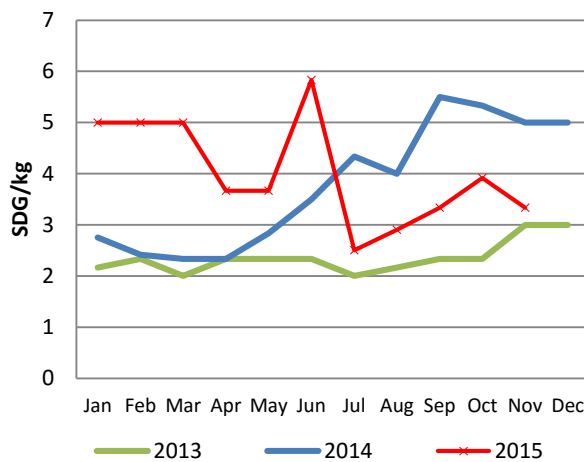
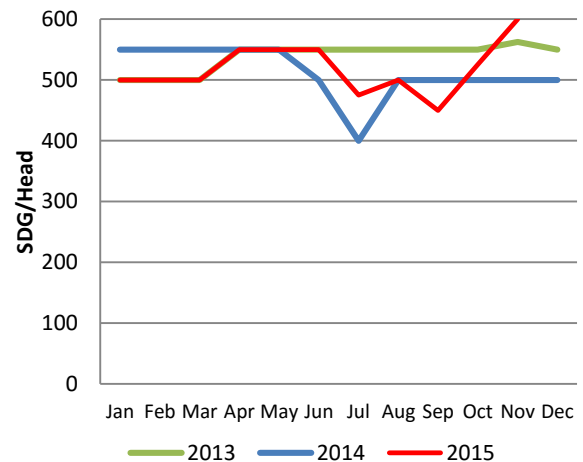


FIGURE 3: GOAT PRICES IN DAMAZINE MARKET



Cereal prices were expected to increase by March 2016, as a result of the below-average production in the state and the anticipated increase in demand from other parts of the country.

Livestock (goat) prices showed an upward trend in the last quarter of 2015, and were higher than what they were at the same time in the last two years. The terms of trade between goat and sorghum (i.e. the amount of sorghum that can be purchased by selling a male adult goat) were in favour of livestock producers given the decrease in the price of sorghum.

Purchasing Power

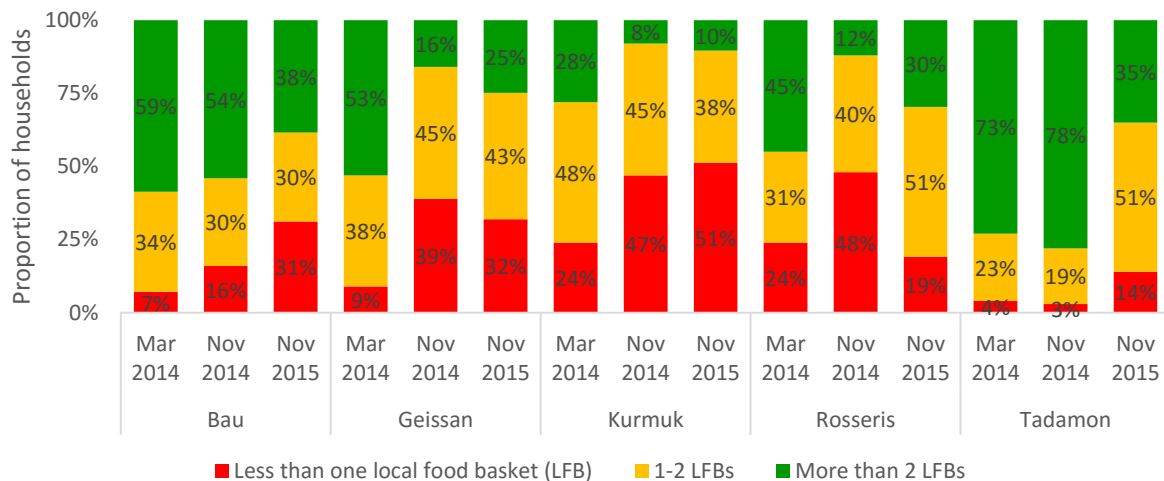
The price of a local food basket (LFB) was used as a benchmark against which to compare household income, to determine the level of purchasing power. In November 2015, the cost of the local food basket was 5.46 SDG per capita, which was 34 percent higher than the same time last year.

The proportion of households who could not afford the cost of a local food basket in Bau locality increased by 15 percentage points compared to November 2014. Likewise, a slight deterioration was seen in Tadamon locality. More than 30 percent of interviewed households in Bau, Geissan and Kurmuk localities were unable to afford the local food basket. This could be explained by decreased access to income from sale of crops and below-average availability of agricultural wage labour opportunities, especially in the large agricultural schemes, both due to the poor agricultural season. The cost of the food basket compared to other parts of the country was relatively low. This was mainly attributed to low prices of cereal, cooking oil and fresh and dry vegetables that were locally produced and processed.

The Local Food Basket

The LFB consisted of the following food items: cereals (sorghum), milk, dry vegetables, cooking oil, goat meat, cow meat, onions and sugar. The amount of each food item was computed so as to minimize the cost of the basket, while meeting the minimum requirement of 2,100 kilocalories per person per day. Households were classified as having poor purchasing power (households that could not afford the cost of one LFB), borderline purchasing power (households that could afford between one and two baskets) and acceptable purchasing power (households that could afford more than two baskets).

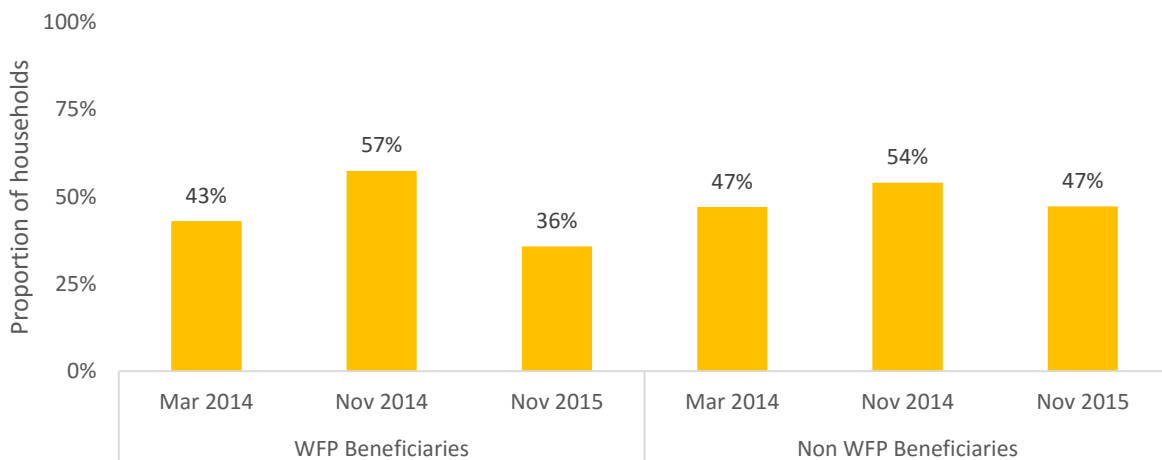
FIGURE 4: HOUSEHOLD PURCHASING POWER



Household Expenditure

The percentage of households who spent more than 65 percent of their expenditure on food (a threshold above which households are more likely to experience economic stress) decreased for both assisted and non-assisted households in Blue Nile. This trend would normally indicate an improvement in economic stress, however, given the mixed situation seen in purchasing power, it was possible that the decreased expenditure on food was a result of households having to meet non-negotiable needs for non-food items, including health care. Also, it could be partially a result of WFP’s recent food assistance response. Thirty-six percent of beneficiary households spent more than 65 percent of total expenditure on food, compared to 47 percent of non-beneficiary households. Approximately one-third of food expenditure was spent on cereals, followed in order of important by vegetables, cooking oil, meat and sugar. Main expenditures on non-food items included health services, education, clothes and milling.

FIGURE 5: PROPORTION OF HOUSEHOLDS WHO SPEND MORE THAN 65 PERCENT OF TOTAL EXPENDITURE ON FOOD



Household Food Consumption

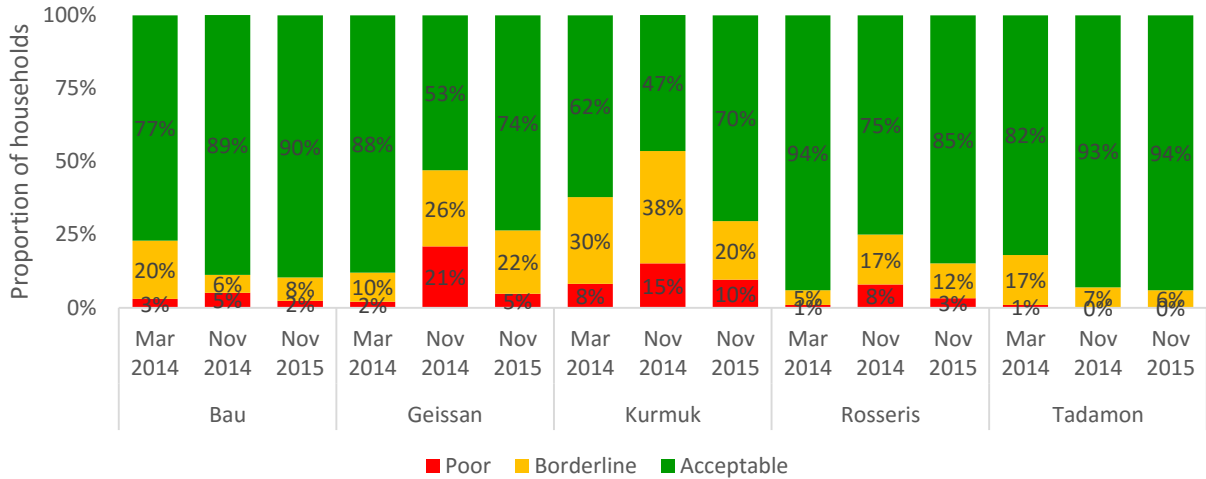
The dietary diversity and food frequency of sampled households was largely acceptable, with between 70 to 94 percent of households having acceptable food consumption. Overall household food consumption among sampled households improved compared to the same time last year. However, the proportion of households with acceptable food consumption in Geissan and Kurmuk localities were smallest than the other localities in Blue Nile state.

The Food Consumption Score

Food consumption data was collected and analyzed using standard WFP methodology: the variety and frequency of different foods consumed over a 7-day recall period was recorded to calculate a weighted FCS. Weights were based on the nutritional density of the foods. Using standard threshold, households were classified as having either poor, borderline or acceptable food consumption.

As in previous rounds of food security monitoring, household food consumption was better in Bau, Rosseris, and Tadamon localities, where more than 80 percent of interviewed households were found to have acceptable food consumption. The proportion of households with acceptable food consumption increased by 23 percentage points in Kurmuk and by 21 percentage points in Geissan. A small improvement compared to the same time last year was also seen in Rosseris, while Tadamon and Bau remained largely unchanged.

FIGURE 6: HOUSEHOLD FOOD CONSUMPTION

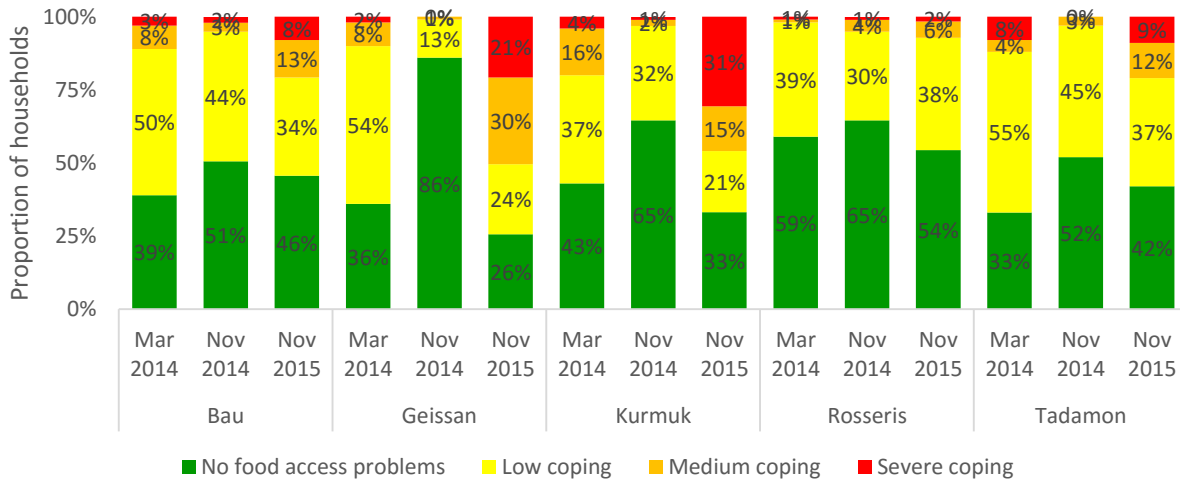


Perceived Food Access

Households were asked if there were times in the one week prior to data collection when they did not have enough food (or money to buy food). If they experienced such situations, they were asked what strategies they employed to cope with the shortage. In November 2015, the proportions of households reported having experienced food access problem had significantly increased in Kurmuk and Geissan localities compared to the same time last year. The severity of the coping mechanisms employed by the population had also increased. Insecurity and physical inaccessibility were among the main reasons behind the change in these two localities. The percentage of households that reported food access problems in Tadamon and Rosseris localities had increased modestly compared to same time last year, possibly related to the indirect negative impacts of the El Nino phenomenon.

The increased use of negative coping strategies in parts of the surveyed population raises concerns about the sustainability of the gains seen in food security (see below).

FIGURE 7: PERCEIVED FOOD ACCESS



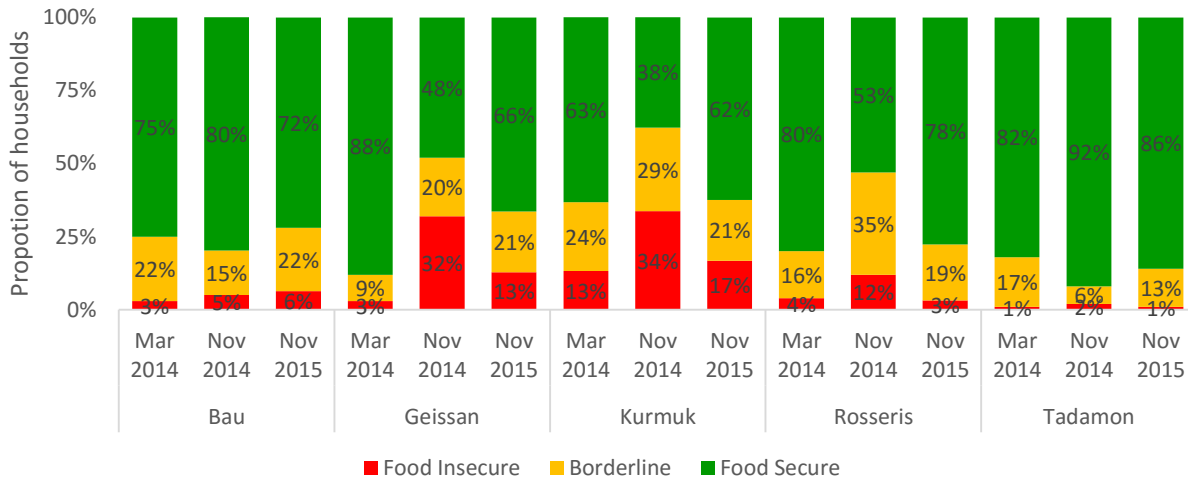
The most commonly reported coping strategies were to rely on less preferred or less expensive foods, followed by borrowing food or money from friends or relatives. Few reports were received about households reducing the size of portions or eating fewer meals per day.

Food Security

Food insecurity was more prevalent in Geissan and Kurmuk compared to the other localities, despite substantial improvements compared to the last month last year: The proportion of food insecure households in the two localities had decreased from 32-34 percent to 13-17 percent. The situation among sampled households in Bau, Rosseris and Tadamon was better, with fewer than 10 percent of households being food insecure. The improvement in food security in Geissan, Kurmuk and Rosseris could be attributed to the improvement in food access resulting from the exceptionally good harvest in the 2014/15 season and moderate food prices. Ongoing food assistance could also be a contributing factor. Despite improvements, concerns remains that the poor 2015/16 season could prolong and deepen the upcoming lean season.

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FIGURE 8: FOOD SECURITY



Households who self-identified as IDPs exhibited similar levels of food security compared to households who self-identified as residents. Seventy-six percent of IDPs and 70 percent of residents were classified as being food secure. The sample of returnees was too small to generate reliable statistics; however, among the very few households that self-identified as returnees, nearly all were classified as food insecure.

In November 2015, the food security situation had improved slightly for both the assisted and non-assisted households compared to the same time last year. There was no significant difference in the level of food security between households receiving food assistance and non-assisted households.

FIGURE 9: FOOD SECURITY COMPARISON BETWEEN ASSISTED AND NON-ASSISTED HOUSEHOLDS

