



Tajikistan

Food Security Monitoring System

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Highlights

The Russian economic downturn continued in 2015 reducing employment opportunities for Tajik labour migrants in the Russian Federation. Being one of the remittance dependent countries combined with depreciation of the Russian ruble, the crisis increased the volume and frequency of reduction in remittances, 80 percent of which are reportedly used by Tajik households to purchase food.

Most indicators of food security have remained relatively stable and some of them have deteriorated compared to the data from the same period in 2014 (Figure 1). Food Security analyses of key indicators (current food consumption status, percent of food expenditure and use of livelihood coping/asset depletion strategies) confirm that 5 percent of the total interviewed households are severely and 22 percent are moderately food insecure, compared to 4 and 23 respectively for same season in December 2014.

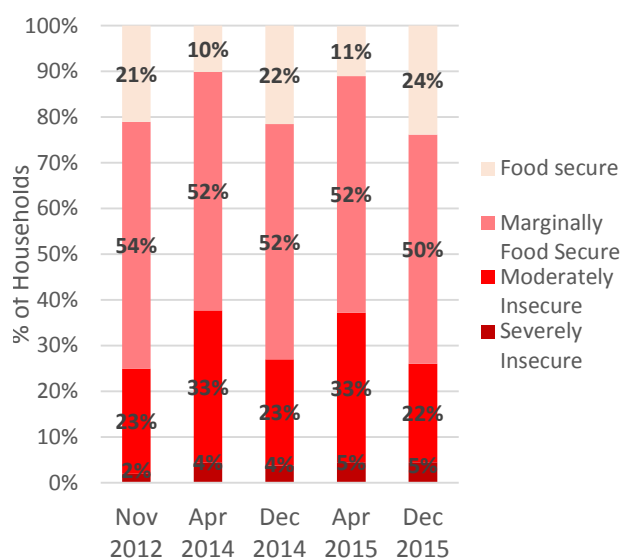


Figure 1: Overall Food Security

Food insecurity still affects certain areas more than others: Southern Khatlon, North Sughd, Ghonchi and Istaravshan show improvements, Khatlon Rainfed zone

and Rasht Valley zone have sharply deteriorated with the highest proportion of severely and moderately food insecure households. Meanwhile areas with relatively better indicators in previous surveys have deteriorated this time around, such as Eastern and Central Zeravshan, Western Pamir and Khatlon Mountain area.

The Coping Strategy and Food consumption indicators show that households affected by a reduction of remittances coped worse than households whose income from remittances remained unaffected, in particular: 41 percent spent savings, 26 relied on less preferred or less expensive food, 39 percent of affected households purchased food on credit, 11 percent had 'poor' and 'borderline' food consumption score.

According to the country's State Statistics Agency (SSA), the production of cereals in 2015 was equal to 1.39 million tons, up 5.7 percent against the previous year and more by 10.5 percent compared to the 5 year average (2010-2014). The wheat flour price was higher by 7.8 percent in December 2015 compared to December 2014 even though the agriculture sector performed well and the wheat imports increased in comparison to the same period last year.

The most important reason for households to take on new debts was to buy food, reported around 48 percent, which is higher in comparison to December 2014, when the proportion was 40 percent. Other 16 percent of the interviewed households accrued new debt to seek health care, which is 7 percent more than the same season of 2014.

Severe weather conditions and natural shocks impacted households in the second half of the year 2015 (34 percent households reported 'severe weather conditions' and 25 percent reported 'harvest failures'). High disruption of food stocks was also observed (64 percent of households reported possession of food stocks compared to 74 percent in Dec 2014).

The Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS) provides a seasonal trend of food insecurity in rural Tajikistan by analyzing data across 13 livelihood zones. The data for this bulletin was collected in December 2015.

Context and Recent Developments

Reliance on food imports and external market variations, vulnerability to natural disasters, limited arable land, and a landlocked geographic location still contribute in making Tajikistan one of the poorest countries in Central Asia. Tajikistan's GDP growth was 6 percent in 2015 according to official statistics, below growth figures of 2014 (6.7 percent) and 2013 (7.4 percent). Despite having reached lower-medium income status in 2015, Tajikistan still remains the only country in Central Asia that is categorized as facing 'serious' food security issues according to the 2015 Global Hunger Index (GHI) report by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

According to the country's State Statistics Agency, the production of cereals in 2015 was 1.39 million tons, 5.7 percent more compared to the previous year¹. The production of wheat itself increased in 2015, 838 thousand tons against 769.7 thousand tons in 2014, which is almost 9 percent more compared to 2014. The import of the wheat increased as well by 11 percent in 2015, from 775 thousand in 2014 to 860 thousand in 2015². Despite of the relatively better availability of cereal products during this year (Figure 2), the retail prices for wheat flour were 7.2 percent higher³ in the 4th quarter of 2015 compared to 4th quarter of 2014, the year with poorer availability of this main staple product.

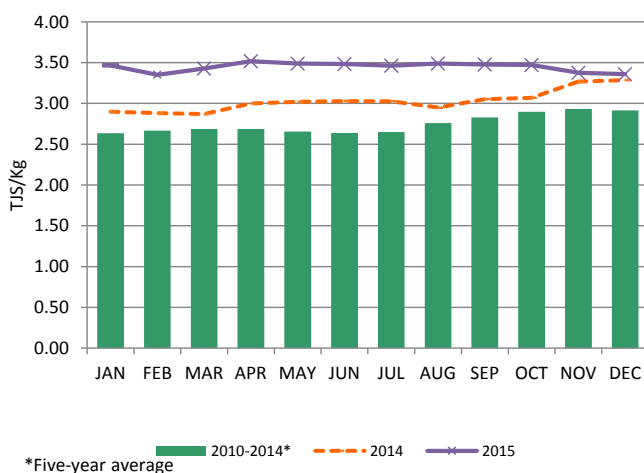


Figure 2: Wheat flour first grade price

Despite good harvests of other products and quite stable prices of vegetables and meat products in 2015, prices for other main staple products (wheat flour, sugar, vegetable oil, milk products) remained higher than the previous year of

1 Socio-Economic Situation in Tajikistan 2015, №3 – 2015, State Statistics Agency of the Republic of Tajikistan, p. 18

2 CUSTOMS SERVICE OF TAJIKISTAN

3 WFP market prices monitoring, VAM Country Report Portal: <http://foodprices.vam.wfp.org>

observation. Due to inflation, prices food items has been raised by 4.13 percent, for non-food items by 7.8 percent. Prices for paid services went up by 2.3 percent⁴. This presents an obstacle to food security for many households. During previous rounds of FSMS, many households were benefitting from remittances, which improved their food consumption and purchasing power. However income from remittances declined in the first half of 2015 against the same period in 2014⁵. Working migrants decreased by more than 10 percent in the 4th quarter of 2015⁶. Such dependency represents a higher risk for GDP growth, livelihoods and food security. A sudden economic or political downturn would result in a much sharper reduction in income with immediate and direct impact on households' purchasing power.

Rate of Tajik Somoni (TJS) depreciated against US Dollar by approximately 32 percent according to National Bank of Tajikistan since last year. It also caused the price of other main imported staple products in Tajikistan to increase. For instance, sugar price increased up to 14 percent, in comparison to December 2014.

Real remittance income continued to fall in January 2016. This is partially seasonal, but the Ruble continued to decline in value, also driving down the value of earnings in Somoni terms. The average real value of remittances decreased from a high of about 1100 Somoni in November to about 775 Somoni in January 2016⁷.

Malnutrition was and remains an issue in Tajikistan since the last countrywide Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) in 2012. Acute malnutrition (wasting) affects 10 percent of children under five, which also includes four percent that are severely wasted. Chronic malnutrition (stunting) has not changed significantly based on DHS 2012 figures against nationwide survey in 2005, with a prevalence of 26.0 percent measured in 2012.

Anemia also presents a public health concern, with a prevalence of 24.2 percent among women of reproductive age and of 28.8 percent of children 6-59 months⁸.

4 National Bank report: http://www.nbt.tj/upload/iblock/2ac/January-June_2015_en.pdf

5 Asian Development Bank, <http://www.adb.org/countries/tajikistan/economy>

6 World Bank survey "Listening to Tajikistan": <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tajikistan/brief/listening2tajikistan>

7 <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tajikistan/brief/listening2tajikistan>

8 2012 Tajikistan Demographic and Health Survey (DHS)

Focus on Remittances: Background

Remittances, mostly from migrants working in Russia, equal to approximately 43 percent of the Tajikistan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) making Tajikistan one of most remittance-dependent country in the world. Following the contraction of Russian GDP by 4.6 percent in the second quarter, a renewed downward trend registered in the second half of 2015 in the exchange rate of the Russian Ruble against the US dollar. This is having serious negative impacts on households relying on remittances from Russia for their livelihoods, with food security being a primary concern (for approximately 24 percent of rural households). Remittances from labour migrants have been one of the key contributors to Tajikistan's economic growth and poverty reduction. According to the National Bank remittances dropped by 32 percent in first 6 months of 2015 and poverty rate reached 36.1 percent in rural areas⁹.

Tajikistan is already feeling the Russian ruble collapse¹⁰. The main indicator of the ruble crisis for Tajikistan is the return of labor migrants in large volumes and inability to send migrants to Russia compared to the December 2014. According to the Migration Service under the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment of Tajikistan, 523,500 labour migrants went to Russia from 01 January 2015 to 01 December 2015, which is on average 25 percent lower than 2014. As per data of the Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation, the number of male Tajik nationals living in Russia reportedly decreased during the last year by 14.3 percent – from 817,000 in January 2015 to 700,000 in January 2016¹¹. The number of female Tajik nationals living in Russia decreased over the reported period by 11.5 percent – from 182,000 in January 2015 to 161,000 in January 2016.

The economic slowdown in Russia had a major impact on Tajikistan's economy in 2015 through decreased US Dollar value of remittances and along with the strong depreciation of the Russian ruble and National Tajik Somoni¹² (Figure 3). This slowed the growth in services, lowered purchase power and domestic demand and put inflationary pressure on the price of the main staple products for Tajik households. The

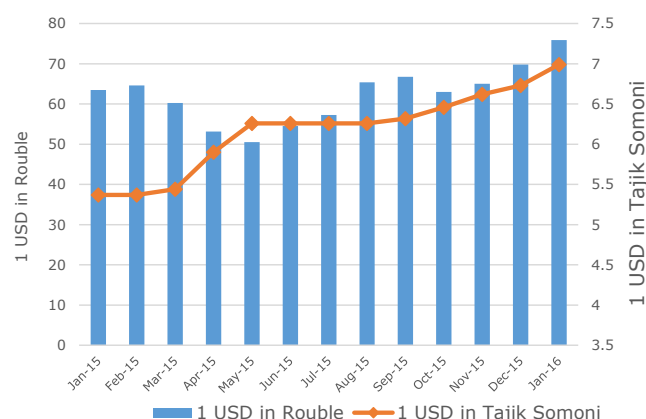


Figure 3: Depreciation of the Somoni and Ruble

national average retail price of wheat flour has increased by 2.5 percent, price of sugar rose by 14 percent, and the price of rice and vegetable oil increased by 4 percent between December 2014 and December 2015. This further put economic pressure on low-income households which already spend a large proportion of their budget on food.

Despite the Rouble crises in Russia, flow of remittances in the rural area for this round was slightly higher compared to December 2014. The main reason for the higher remittances is attributed to all the savings sent by migrants before their return back, the share of which (returning migrants) decreased at the end of 2015¹³. As shown in Figure 4, the share of households receiving remittances, which experienced a reduction in volume and frequency of remittances, increased in December 2015 compared to December 2014 confirming a downward trend of remittances volume in the first paragraph. It is important to note that, 64 percent of the households indicated that their

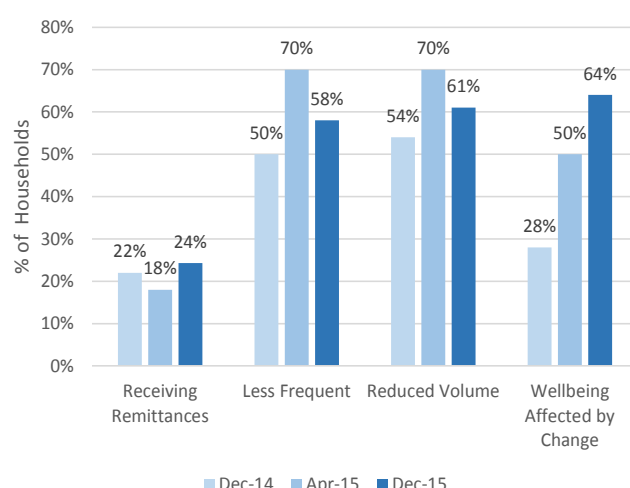


Figure 4: Remittances impact

⁹ World Bank's Economic Update No.2 (p.1, p.5) <http://www-wds.worldbank.org>

¹⁰ <http://news.tj/en/news/collapse-russian-ruble-affects-many-families-tajikistan>

¹¹ Asia plus- <http://news.tj/en/news/number-tajik-labor-migrants-working-russian-reportedly-decreases-14-percent>

¹² Based on exchange rates of National Bank of Tajikistan (from 1st Jan 2015 to 1st Jan 2016)

¹³ World Bank, Listening to Tajikistan <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/publicdoc/2016/3/416071456993815118/L2TJK-Migration-Feb16-en.pdf>

subjective wellbeing around December 2015 was negatively affected by change in the amount of remittances, more than 14 percent compared to April 2015 and more than 2 times against December 2014. The indicator of the wellbeing might be deteriorating as a result of decrease in expenditure on food and healthcare in order to pay for other basic needs¹⁴. Figure 4 does not include households which did not receive remittances at all, over the past three months, which may slightly increase the percentage of overall affected households having migrants.

Current FSMS results show that 86 percent of the remittances received are used by households to purchase food, which is more than 8 percent compared to same season of 2014, indicating that remittances are essential for the food security of families receiving them. Meanwhile household use of remittances for construction has decreased forming a continuous trend around 5 percent during last 3 rounds into 2 percent respectively in December 2015. Therefore, reduced frequency and amount of remittances have a direct negative impact on household food security.

Focus on Remittances: Impact on Household Food Security

In terms of Food Consumption Score (FCS), a small difference was observed between the wellbeing of affected households through reduction in remittances and non-affected households with a percentage of households that had an acceptable FCS without resorting to coping strategies (Figure 5).

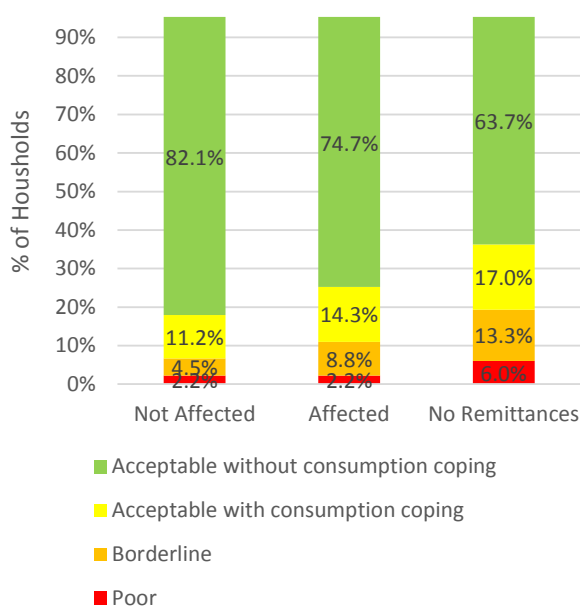


Figure 5: Food Consumption Score

¹⁴ World Bank report "Listening to Tajikistan" <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tajikistan/brief/listening2tajikistan>

Households affected by a reduction of remittances had better FCS than the ones of the households that received no remittances at all, although with a slight difference in the shares of the households with a 'borderline' and 'poor' FCS¹⁵.

This round of FSMS is reporting that more households (14.3 percent) receiving reduced remittances had to resort to coping strategies to maintain an acceptable FCS compared to households not affected by reduced remittances (11.2 percent). The coping strategy most typical of the affected group was to resort to 'spend savings' (41 percent in December against 21 percent in April), though purchasing food on credit remained the most frequent coping strategy for all groups (Figure 6).

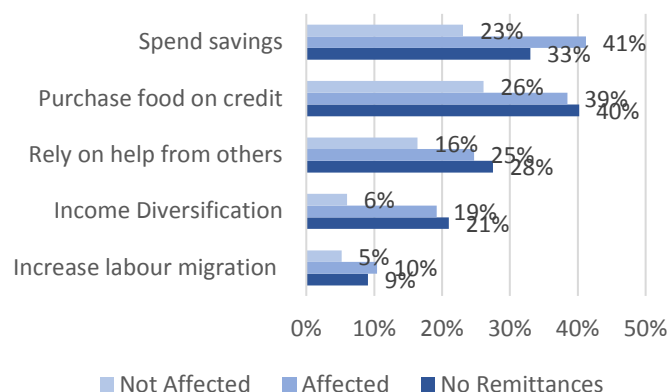


Figure 6: Households Applying Livelihood coping Strategies

On the other hand, the decline in remittances does not seem to have had a significant impact on households' assets yet. An observation with serious consequences, however, is that the affected group has now joined the non-remittances group in decreasing expenditures as their main coping strategy (Figure 7).

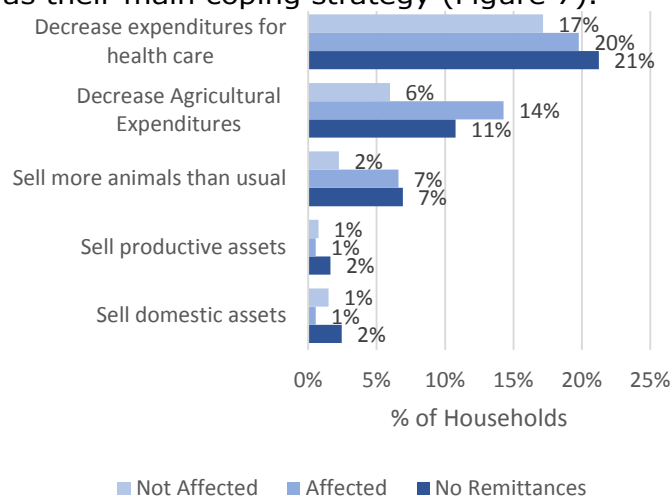


Figure 7: Households Asset Depletion Strategies

¹⁵ Households with 'poor' or 'borderline' food consumption patterns have limited access to protein sources, fruits, and vegetables, which jeopardizes the nutrition status of affected households.

The group affected by a decline in remittances has also clearly joined the non-remittances receiver group. By resorting much more frequently to negative food consumption patterns (Figure 8), the gap has widened between the better-off remittances receivers. The most frequently used strategy by households was relying on less preferred food and less expensive food. This is not different from other households but the difference between households affected by a drop in remittances (26 percent) and unaffected households (21 percent) indicates that the poorer food consumption pattern among the affected households is likely due to a reduced or unpredictable income from remittances.

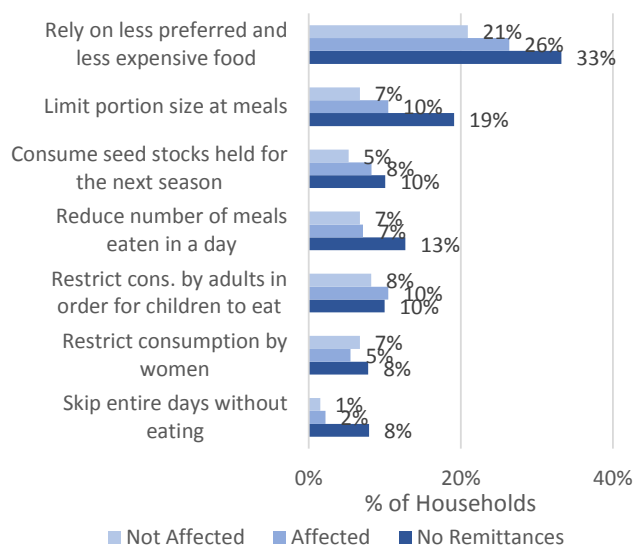


Figure 8: Households Applying Food Consumption Strategies

As described above, using remittances for the construction of houses became less common during the surveyed period. Similarly, fewer households took out new loans for construction and for purchasing agricultural inputs. Twelve percent of households affected by a reduction in remittances accrued new debt in the three months prior to December 2015, against only 8 percent of the households not affected. In many cases (40 percent of the affected households), new debt was accrued to purchase food on credit: while 39 percent of all borrowing by households with reduced remittances was from shop owners, and only 12 percent of the unaffected households accrued new debts from shops during that period.

It is important to note that the impact of the drop of remittances on food security outcomes will vary per region (Figure 9), depending on the importance of remittances as income source in that region. For instance, while in the Khatlon Mountains, Rasht and Eastern Pamir only 1 to 15 percent of households depend primarily on remittances, this proportion is much higher in the Central and Eastern Zeravshan valley,

Panjakent, Ghonchi and Istaravshan, Darvoz and Kurgan Tyube, (between 20 and 30 percent). These remittance-dependent areas are likely to suffer more severe consequences than the Rasht Valley and the Eastern Pamir Plateau.

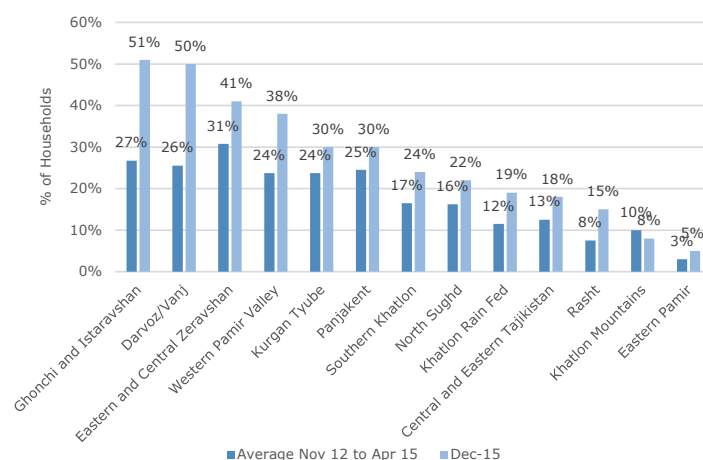


Figure 9: Households dependency on remittances

Focus on Remittances: Outlook for the next six months

Although being still very important, remittances and migration will continue decreasing and will contribute less and less to household incomes. Migrants will return slowly, however in some regions migration will not be reduced at all, but on the contrary, it will increase as a coping strategy. The continued recession in Russia will negatively affect the amount of remittances being sent by labour migrants working in Russia. In the current context of slowed economic growth in Russia and weak currency, the coming seasonal increase in remittances will not be expected for all households.

Food prices will be expected to go up slightly during the coming months because of a tendency for a seasonal increase, depreciation of the national currency and forecasted high inflation in 2016. These factors will continue to put economic pressure on low income groups which spend a large portion of their budget on food, especially those with migrants who are unable to return to their jobs abroad.

Exposure to Economic and Natural Shocks¹⁶

High food prices remain the main economic shock for households in all zones. Majority of the respondents reported high food prices as one of the three main shocks in the past three months before the survey (Figure 10). However, high food prices were mentioned as an economic shock only by 79 percent of the households, which is slightly lower compared to April 2015. This indicates good harvest season and higher volume of imported cereal products.

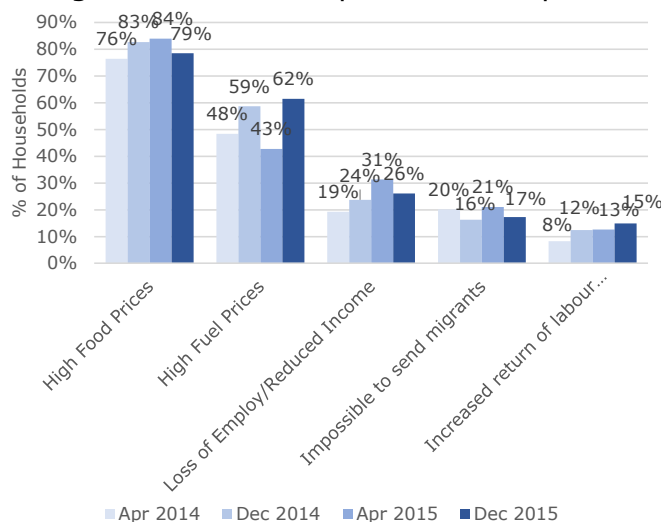


Figure 10: Households Reporting Economic Shocks

High fuel prices were reported as a shock within three months before the survey by 62 percent of the households. In April 2015, only 43 percent of respondents considered high fuel prices as a shock affecting the household food security. The reason could be the increased demand for fuel in the harvest season due to expansion of agricultural work in the fields.

Loss of employment or reduced salary of the breadwinners affected 26 percent of households, which is much higher than the same season of December 2014, when 24 percent reported facing this difficulty.

Natural disasters such as flooding and landslides impacted more households in the second half than the first half of 2015 (Figure 11). The high percentage of households reported 'severe weather conditions' (34 percent) caused by severe mudflows and earthquake in GBAO and Rasht. 'Harvest failures' (25 percent) can be attributed to heavy snowfall and frost wave at spring time (2015) in the Northern Sugd and Panjakent, where majority of households were impacted by harvest failures due to bad weather conditions. According to the Committee of Emergency Situation, the estimated damage from natural disasters reached 326 million TJS, which is almost 8 times more than 2014.

¹⁶ 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

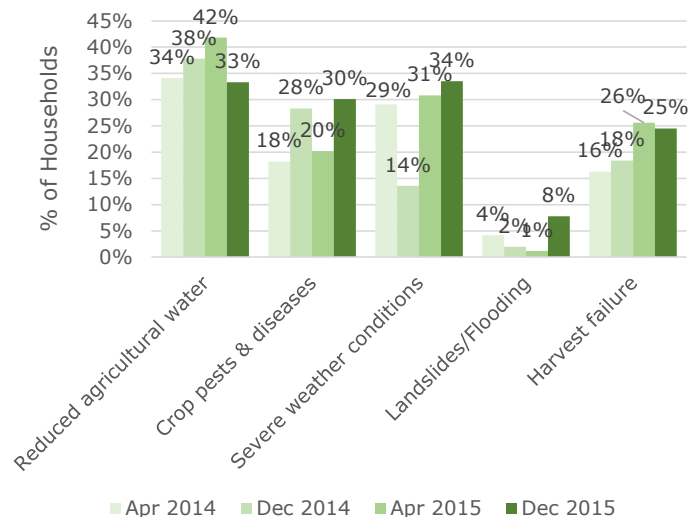


Figure 11: Households Reporting Natural Shocks

Some shocks were repeatedly reported over the past year and identified as chronic issues that need to be addressed at any time of the year such as access to drinking water and agricultural water. Reduced agriculture and drinking water was reported by nearly 33 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. The main reason for that still remains slow rehabilitation of irrigation infrastructure, run-down of pumping system and land degradation. The areas where the most households reported to have been affected by reduced agricultural water were Panjakent (61 percent), and Khatlon Rainfed area (60 percent).

Crop pests and diseases increased from 28 percent in December 2014 to 30 percent in December 2015 and 10 percentage points more than in April 2015. This is likely to have been caused by relatively warmer temperatures.

Food Stocks

High disruption was observed in food stocks (Figure 12) compared to December 2014. Only limited rural households stored surplus food, especially wheat flour and potatoes, in anticipation for the winter months when food availability and access is low. During this round of the survey, 64 percent of households reported that they currently possessed food stocks, which is less (for all products) by 10 percent than in December 2014 (74 percent). Food stocks for main staple products has been depleted significantly. Wheat flour and potato stocks in households decreased to 53 percent, which is 35 percent less compared to December 2014. Households reported sharply reduced stocks of oil, fruit and vegetable, only 25 percent

possessed fruit/vegetable stocks and 38 percent of respondents had oil stocked. 60 percent of households indicated that the main source for food stocks was a local market, 30 percent of the stocked food came from their own crop and garden production, 6 percent from borrowing or debts, and the remaining 4 percent from relatives aid and bartering. Livestock possessed by households also decreased to 72 percent in 2015 against 79 percent in 2014.

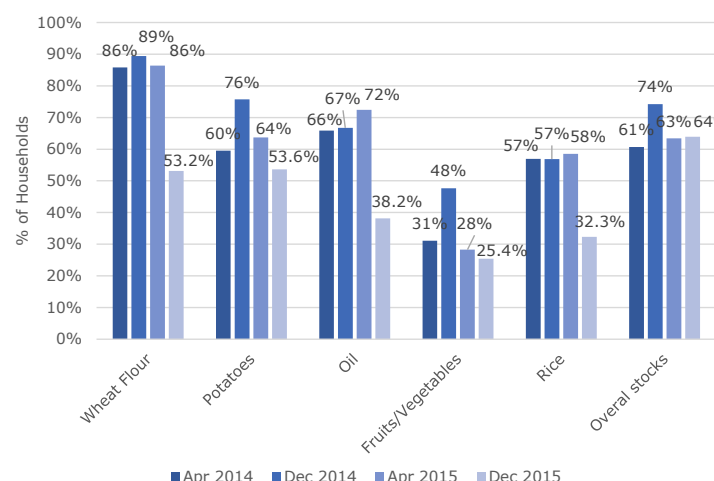


Figure 12: Food stocks

The food stocks prepared by households in December 2015 were expected to last for 6.8 weeks on average, similar to the response in December 2014 (6 weeks), but this varies depending on livelihood zones. In the Khatlon livelihood zone (excluding the mountainous area) household stocks reportedly lasted for only 3 weeks, the lowest average in the country.

Food Consumption and Dietary Diversity

During the surveyed season the average Food Consumption Score did not show substantial change from previous FSMS results (Figure 13).

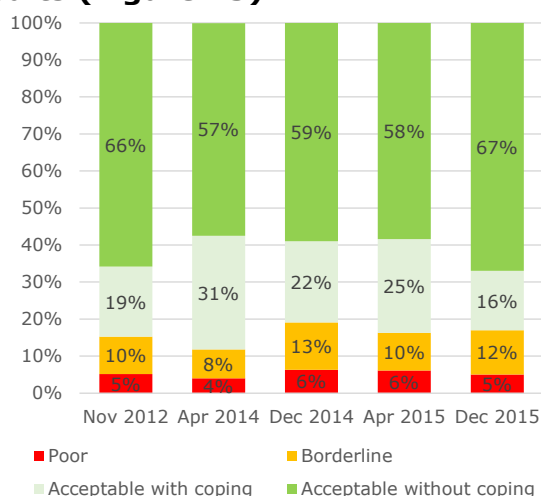


Figure 13: Food Consumption Score Trends

The combined percentage of 'poor' and 'borderline' households stayed within the narrow band width of 12 and 19 percent which was observed in the last three years. Though, it was only two percent lower in December 2015 than during the same period last year, possibly because of better harvest and increased importing of main staple foods in 2015. However, 15 percent of the households have poor or borderline food consumption patterns. Households with poor or borderline food consumption patterns have limited access to protein sources, fruits, and vegetables. In addition, 16 percent of households with acceptable consumption are at risk because they rely on consumption-based coping strategies. In the event of constricted resources, they will reduce consumption of better quality foods, thus pushing them into the borderline category.

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The FCS of female headed households improved from 8 percent, having a poor FCS in December 2014, to 6 percent in December 2015. In the same period, the indicator for male headed households did insignificantly change by only half percent (from 4.5 to 5 percent).

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FCS for December 2015 divided per livelihood zone indicates differences between areas (Figure 14). Rasht scored worse than almost 56 percent of the interviewed households with either a 'borderline' or 'poor' FCS, which is increased from 31 percent score recorded in December 2014, but shows improvement in comparison with April 2015 (from 71 to 56). As explained in the special focus section, remittances are usually much less of an income source for households in the Rasht valley, than in other livelihood zones like Darvoz/Vanj (one of the most remittances dependent zones), which moved from group of zones with best food consumption into group of zones with medium indicator (from 0 to 14 percent) in December 2015 in comparison with the same period in 2014. Therefore, it is likely that a decline in

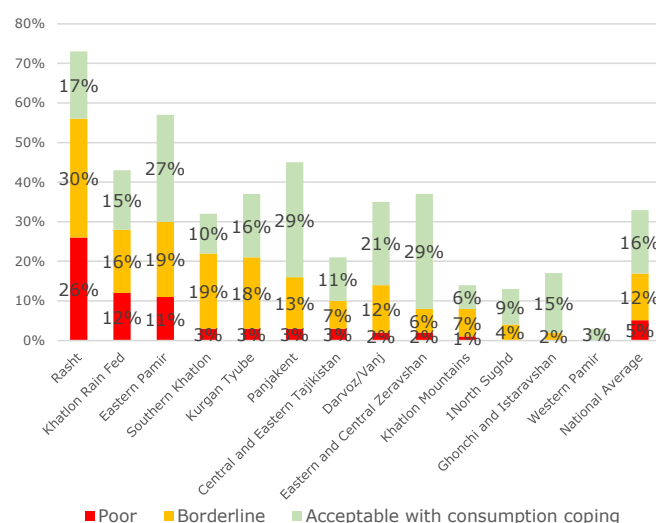


Figure 14: Food Consumption Score Classifications per Region (December 2015)

remittances was the one the main causes of this rapid deterioration in the households with labour migrants in the above mentioned livelihood zone.

The densely populated Khatlon Rain Fed area also comprised a large percentage of households with a 'poor' and 'borderline' FCS: 28 percent, 7 percent more than in April 2015. The best FCS was observed in the Western Pamir Valley (97 percent acceptable without coping strategies), and in North Sughd and Khatlon Mountains (87 and 86 percent).

Southern Khatlon, Kurgan Tyube and Panjakent sorted again as chronically stressed zones, similar to the last 10 rounds of food monitoring surveys that show almost the same indicators with periodic improvements and deteriorating trends. Meanwhile, in 2015 FCS worsened in Panjakent up to 16 percent ('poor' and 'borderline') in December 2015 compared to December 2014.

Households classified as 'borderline' did slightly better than 'poor' but still consumed dairy and meat products only once a week and vegetables only twice a week. (Figure 15) It is worthy to note that despite the availability of fruits and vegetables in local markets and relatively stable prices of meat, on average 'borderline' households only consumed dairy and meat products once a week and households with a 'poor' FCS did not consume dairy and meat products at all (16 percent of the responded households).

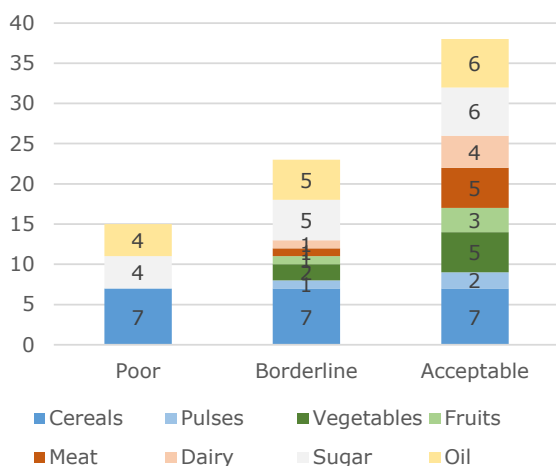


Figure 15: Food Groups Consumed per Week, per FCS Classification

Households in the "acceptable" food group category ate more vegetables and fruits and food rich of proteins, including meat for 5 days in the week preceding the survey. Nonetheless, a low dietary diversity remained a key problem for families of poor and borderline category. The diet of the households with poor and borderline dietary diversity was exclusively based on staples and oils (consumed 4-5 days a week) with some

sugar (4-5 days a week). An average household with a 'poor' FCS consumed cereal products every day of the week, but consumption of dairy, meat and vegetable proteins were essentially absent. This entails serious risk of protein malnutrition, iron deficiencies and diseases especially for young children, pregnant and lactating women, and the elderly

The Dietary Diversity Score (DDS), which indicates how many out of the seven food groups and have been consumed in the last seven days prior to the interview, deteriorated in December 2015 compared to preceding FSMS round in the same period (Figure 16). The percentage of households with an inadequate diet has steadily increased since November 2012. In December 2015, 18 percent of the households had consumed 4 or less food groups in the last seven days, which is considered an inadequate diet, up from 12 percent in November 2012. This trend was confirmed by the FGDs in 2015, where it was identified that people purchased, for example, less meat in order to sustain similar levels of cereal and potato consumption. Two outliers performing much worse than the average were the Eastern Pamir Plateau (67 percent) and the Rasht valley (60 percent) in the 0-4 category.

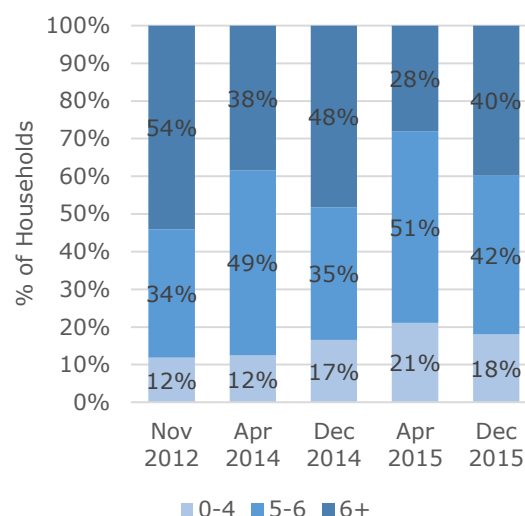


Figure 16: Dietary Diversity Score

It is worthy to mention that although the number of families with poor and borderline food consumption are relatively the same since November 2012. Households which have acceptable food consumption had increased slightly, but they are still "at risk", because they rely on consumption-based coping strategies. In the event of an economic/natural shock or constriction of resources, they will reduce consumption of better quality foods, thus falling into the borderline category of food consumption patterns and less varied diet.

Infant and young child feeding practices

During this round of FSMS, a total number of 894 children under 5 years of age were surveyed to assess infant and young child feeding practices. Age distribution of the surveyed children is provided below (Figure 17).

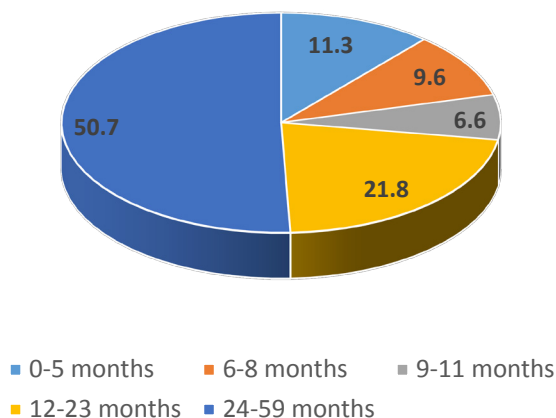


Figure 17: Children distribution by age

Breastfeeding: While 69% of the children under 6 months received breast milk on the day before the survey, only 34 % were exclusively breastfed as recommended. The remaining 35 % received plain water (40 %) or sugary water (28%), tea (36%), animal milk (6 %), bread (20 %) or potatoes (20 %) in addition to breastmilk. Overall, about 11% of the children under 6 months received infant formula. The children who did not receive either breast milk or infant formula on the day before the survey (about 31%) received different solid and semi-solid food items, mainly from Food Group 1 (bread and potatoes), tea/plain water, and other vegetables).

Complementary feeding: While it is recommended to start complementary feeding

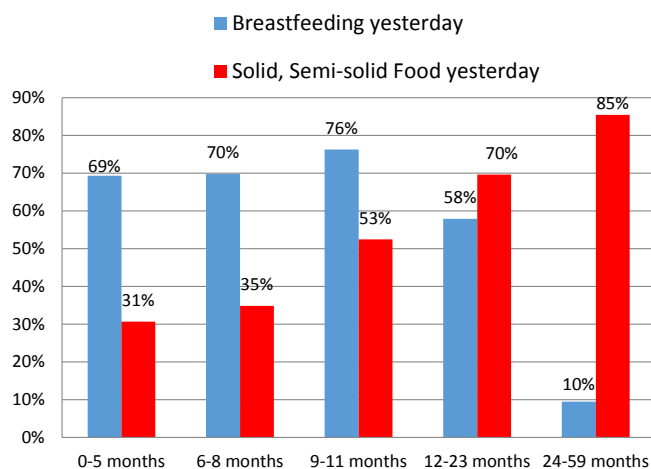


Figure 18: Breastfeeding and introduction of complementary foods

at the age of 6 months, only 35% of the surveyed children 6-8 months of age received solid or semi-solid foods (Figure 18). Only 16 % of breastfed children and 46% of non-breastfed children aged 6-23 months received foods from 4 or more food groups (minimum dietary diversity).

The survey results also indicate that only 22% of children aged 6-23 months were fed iron-rich food or iron-fortified food. In general, the diet of children under 5 years leans toward grains, roots and tubers. Eggs, flesh foods (meat, fish, poultry and liver organ meats), legumes and nuts are the least commonly fed foods (Figure 19) as only about one third of children 24-59 months received eggs, meat, chicken, fish and legumes.

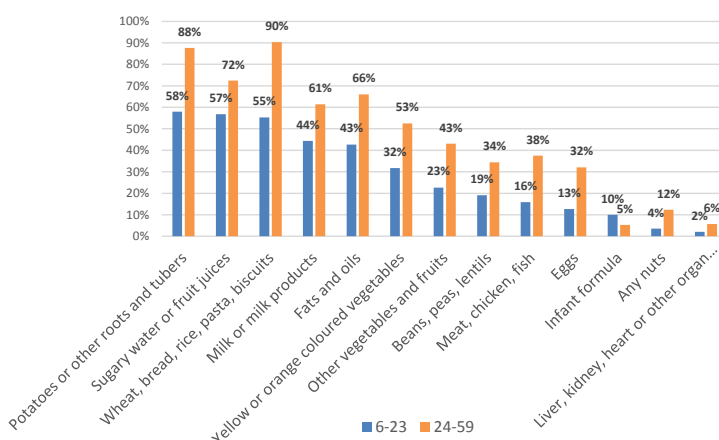


Figure 19: Percentage of consumers of different food groups

This percentage goes further down among children 6-23 months of age. Though, high intake of sugary water or fruit juices was noted. Moreover, only 17 % of non-breastfed children aged 6-23 months and 37 % of breastfed children aged 9-23 months were fed the minimum number of times recommended per day¹⁷ (**minimum meal frequency**). Overall, only 24 % of children 6-23 months of age received a **minimum acceptable diet** in terms of dietary diversity and meal frequency

In conclusion, infant and young child feeding practices observed in the survey are suboptimal, characterized by low rate of exclusive breastfeeding among children under 6 months; late or too early initiation of complementary feeding; low dietary diversity; and inadequate meal frequency.

¹⁷ Minimum is defined as: 3 times for breastfed children 9-23 months; 4 times for non-breastfed children 6-23 months

Coping Strategies

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 consumed in a day. **The widely applied food consumption strategy in December 2015 was the reliance on less expensive food (Figure 20),** applied by 31 percent of households, slightly down from 37 in April 2015 and 38 percent in December 2014 respectively. The more extreme strategies were applied less often in December 2015 compared to December 2014. The consumption of seed stocks for next planting season decreased by 4 percent, the reduction of the number of meals per day by 6 percent, restriction of adults' consumption by 4 percent and restriction of consumption by women by 3 percent.

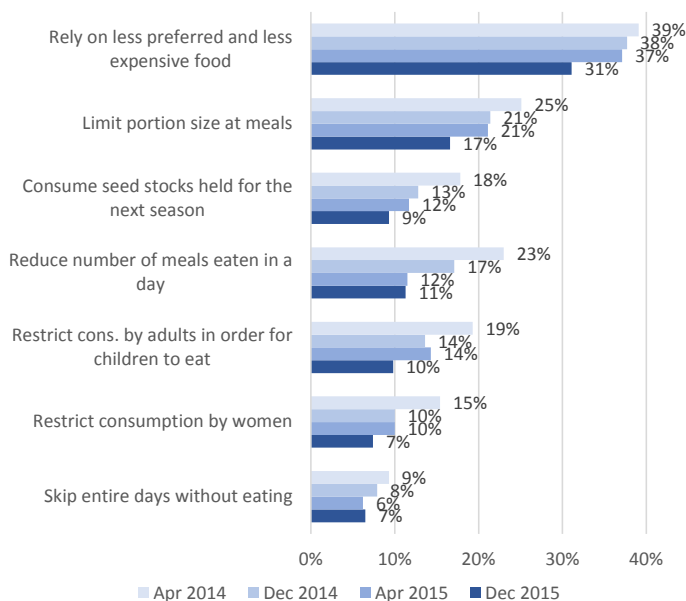


Figure 20: Households' Food Consumption Strategies

More than third of interviewed households continued to apply asset depletion strategies **such as reducing expenditure on health care, and decreasing investments in agriculture, including expenditures for fertilizer, pesticide and veterinary care (Figure 21).** Although the proportion of households using these strategies increased compared to the April 2015, it still remained high and increased risks for the health care and nutritional status of the most vulnerable groups. Households in Eastern and Western Pamir, and Western Panjakent and Eastern and Central Zeravshan valley Zones have used these strategies more frequently. Differences between livelihood zones, however, remain substantial with 22, 23 and 20 percent of the households in Panjakent, Rasht and Khatlon Mountains respectively (between 1 and 13 percent only in the other areas), decreased

their agricultural expenditures to meet food requirements.

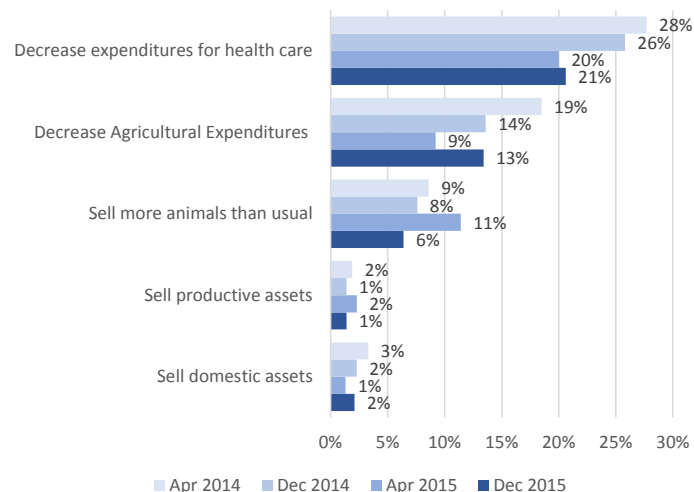


Figure 21: Households' Asset Depletion Strategies

In terms of livelihood diversification strategies (Figure 19), a downward trend was also observed, which could be explained by the reduced opportunities to diversify livelihoods due to the economic slowdown, rather than by the absence of a need for alternative means of subsistence. The use of labour migration is down by 4 percent compared to the last year, which is undoubtedly due to the reduced gains/opportunities of migration. A slight decrease in purchasing food on credit and relying on the help of others was also observed.

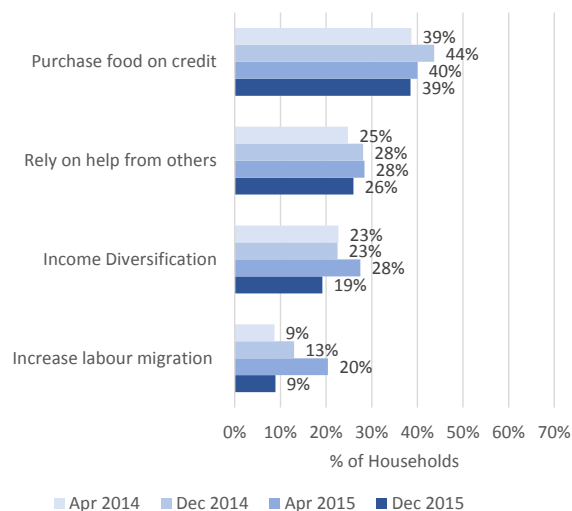


Figure 22: Households' Livelihood Diversification Strategies

More transitory shocks include economic shocks induced by the economic crisis; loss of savings were reported 11% less than in December 2014 and bankruptcy of small businesses increased up to 15 percent (more than the same period of 2014). Although these shocks were less frequently reported than April 2015, it shows that some households were still being affected by

the crisis. Facing these challenges, households try to cope as best they can without further losing any productive assets, as they did before. Households have managed to temporarily reduce the number, frequency and intensity of coping strategies they normally deploy.

The Coping Strategy Index (Figure 23) for the past three months has increased in some livelihood zones showing that households used as many coping strategies to manage their food intake as they did in December 2014. However in some other Livelihood zones, for example in Sughd and in Central Khatlon, coping strategy showed improvements, in general very few households skipped meals for an entire day, reduce children's consumption or took children out of school. Important to note is that spending savings increased which may explain inability to properly prepare for the winter season due to low storage of food stocks in the households interviewed.

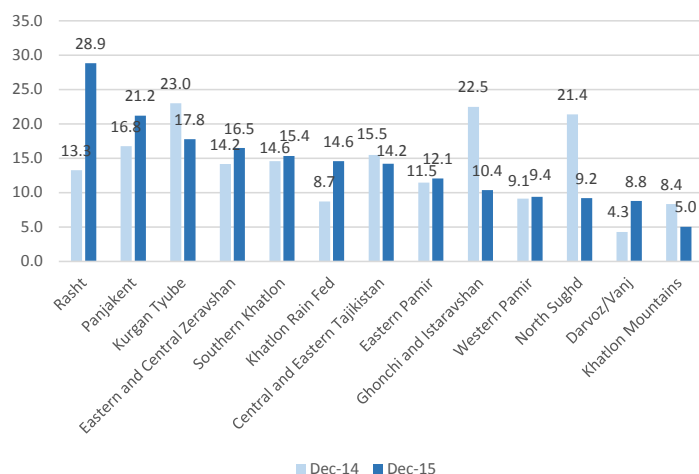


Figure 23: Households coping Strategy Index¹⁸

Income and Food Insecurity

Figure 24 shows that between April 2014 and April 2015, the food security situation deteriorated differently among households with different primary income.

Food insecurity among households dependent on daily wage labour increased by 7 percent in comparison to the same period of 2014. This is likely explained by the decrease in the availability of casual labour in rural areas following the drop in remittances. Rates of food insecurity among households relying on government salaries, pensions and government benefits has remained more or less stable as these income sources are less impacted by the economic trends. A

¹⁸ The reduced coping strategy index is based on the most common set of coping behaviours across countries, such as reduced number of meals, limit portion size, and reflects the stress level of the household (the higher the score, the higher the stress level).

deterioration was observed in the food security of households dependant on the sale and production of field crops, from 25 percent food insecure to 29 percent food insecure.

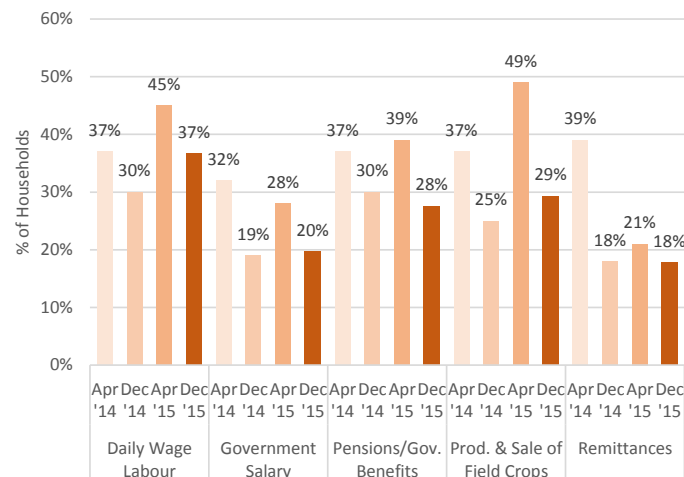


Figure 24: Food Insecurity per Primary Income Source

The same food security situation was observed for the group whose primary source of income is remittances. As discussed in the special section on remittances, income from this source has been significantly reduced. Households whose main source of income is no longer remittances as a result of the crisis are not included in this group. This seems to indicate clearly an erosion of the traditional advantage of the remittance group against other income groups. While the secondary effects of the crisis were impacting the most vulnerable groups first (daily wage labourers, smallholder farmers), there are signs that the crises will also impact the more protected groups, should the current trend persist.

Household Debt

Around 19 percent of households interviewed, accrued new debts in the past three months (Figure 25). The most important reason for taking out new debts was to buy food, approximately 48 percent of the households reported. The second most reported cause of taking out new debts was to cover health expenses reported by 16 percent of interviewed households.

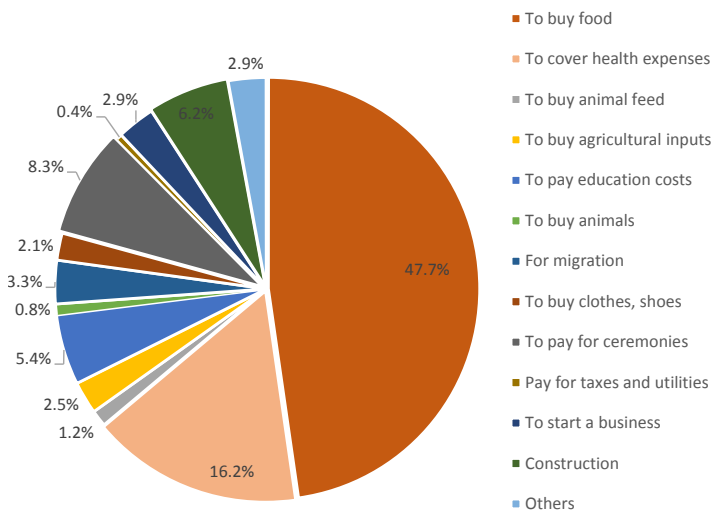


Figure 25: The main reason for recently accrued debt

Most loans for food came from shopkeepers, 59 percent, which is 22 percent more than December 2014. Respondents accrued up to 22 percent "debt for food" from relatives, which is usually given without conditions, 4 percent more than 2014. Households using bank credits for feeding decreased from 30 percent in 2014 down to 12 percent in December 2015. The same outcome could be seen for other debts. People have been trying to avoid higher amounts of bank loans in favour of unconditional relatively small loans from friends, relatives and shopkeepers. A possible reason could be the high fluctuation of the currency exchange rate and high difference of interest rates between loans accrued in National currency and in USD.

The average size of the debt among the interviewed households decreased from 4,200 TJS to 3,500 TJS between December 2014 and December 2015; however, this average remained the same in comparison to April 2015. The debt average of those households which borrowed primarily for health expenses increased from 2,200 TJS in December 2014 to 3,200 TJS in April 2015. Besides accruing more debt to buy food, the average debt decreased from 2500 TJS to 1200 TJS, relative to other reasons.

Generally overall debts taken this round for smaller amounts equate to 48 percent which was 12 percent more than December 2014 where those who contracted debts borrowed less than TJS 1000 (\$128). Consequently, households accruing higher debts decreased to 52 percent from 64 in December 2014.

Overall, 48 percent of all households used the borrowed money to purchase food over the past three months (Figure 26), which is higher in comparison with December 2014, when the proportion was 40 percent. Other 16 percent of interviewed households accrued new debt for health care purposes, which is 7 percent more than the same season of 2014. Debts accrued for migration presumably to purchase a ticket, work authorization and other related expenses did not change: remained at 3 percent as of December 2014.

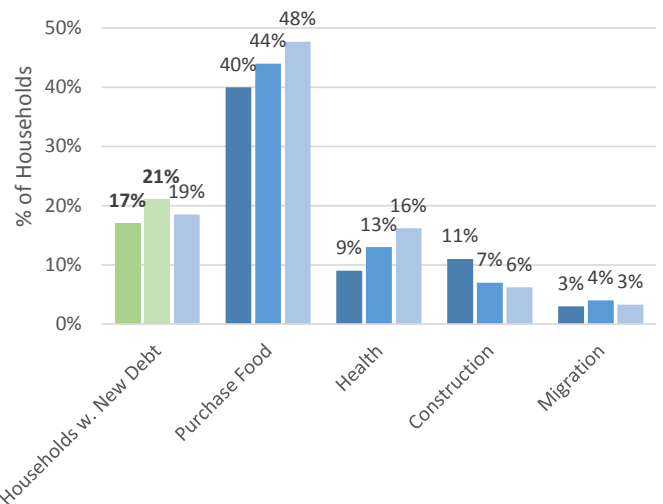


Figure 26: Trend of accruing Debts by households

The unchanged figure can reflect a reduced attractiveness of migration followed by the impact of the crisis, and return of labor migrants compared to the December 2014. Only 6 percent of households reported construction as main reason for debt accrued, which shows 5 percent decrease in comparison to the same season of 2014.

Outlook (February – July 2016)

The overall food security situation in most parts of the country is expected to stay stressed during the next six months. Until the end of the lean season, ongoing deterioration is likely to continue for households which have spent most of their savings and already depleted food stocks. Improvement might be seen in some livelihood zones due to the expected arrival of the early harvest in May 2016 coupled with relatively lower food prices in the local markets. A declining Tajik Somoni, however, could offset this improvement, if the prices for key staple commodities increases.

Remittances continue to remain critical for households' food security. Russian economic growth perspectives remain negative¹⁹ and continuous recession in Russia is negatively affecting the volume of remittances sent by labour migrants working in Russia. Prolonged trend of depreciation of ruble and drop of consumer demand along with decline of real income will reduce job opportunities for Tajik labour migrants in 2016. However, the process of inflow and labor migration trends should be monitored closely due to possible changes in economic prospects of Russia.

Food prices are expected to go up slightly during the coming months due to seasonal growth and depreciation of the national currency along with forecasted inflation in 2016. The high prices and reduction of stocks in the coming months might cause further deterioration of dietary diversity and related poor nutritional status of households (particularly chronic malnutrition). These factors will continue to put economic pressure on low income groups which spend a large portion of their budget on food, especially those with migrants who are unable to return to their jobs abroad.

Households' expenditures have already shown some changes mainly due to the economic crisis, through increased food and health care expenditures from the total non-food expenditures. In the coming months, expenditures on food are expected to remain high, expenditures on heating are expected to increase due to the winter season and the share of expenditures for health care will increase as well. This combined increase in expenditures will affect the most vulnerable households.

Food availability and access to food is expected to improve slightly after the lean season, which will end in May as spring rains in

March-May 2016 appears to be adequate²⁰ for agricultural production (based on the average annual monthly precipitation), leading to good prospects for the agricultural crops, cereals, fruits and vegetables. However, the effect of high food prices and of the economic slowdown in Tajikistan could delay the availability of fresh food stocks. While a decreased amount of households with food stocks was observed in December 2015.

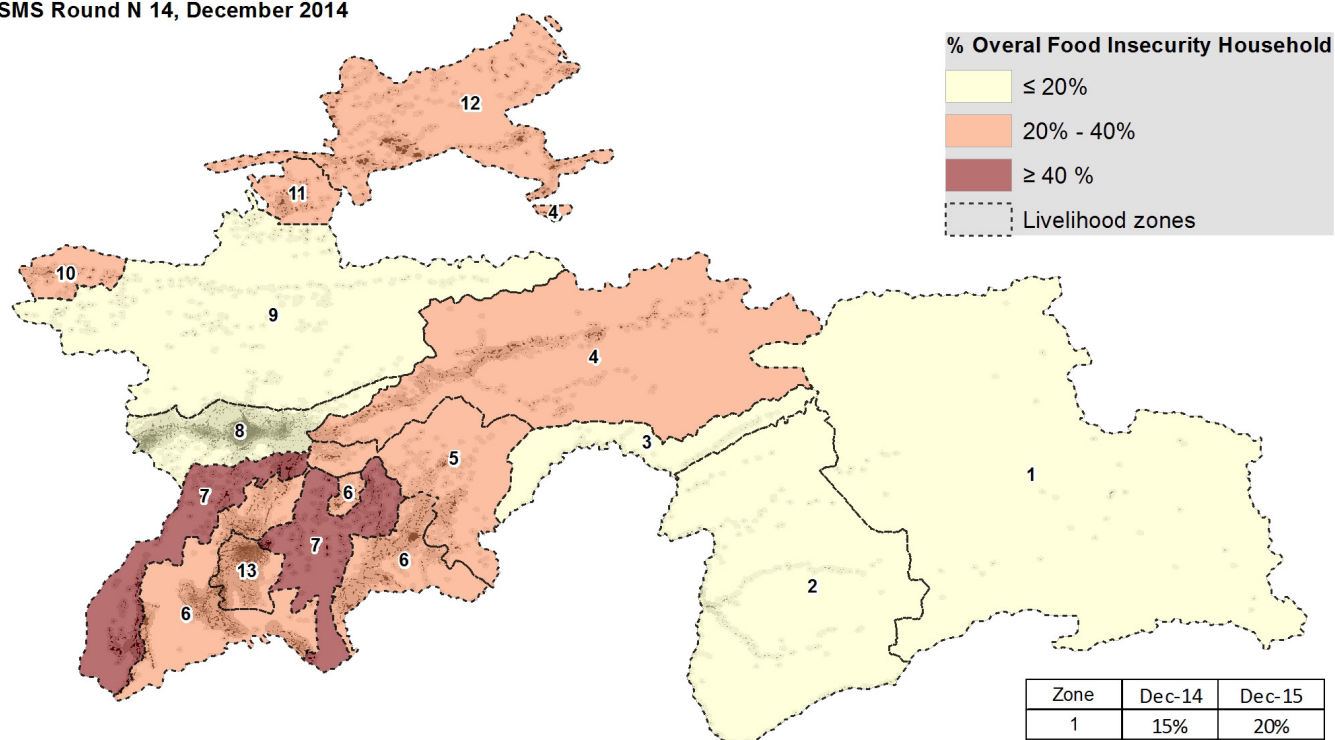
The seasonal availability of pasture might lead to improvement in livestock productivity and value, better food consumption pattern for some households possessing livestock. During spring and summer seasons, many alternative sources of income will be available, which includes the resumption of seasonal agricultural labor opportunities, construction work, casual labor opportunities, particularly in Dushanbe and regional and district centers, migration, and etc.

If the increase of civil servants' wages and pensions promised by the Government materializes, this would have a mitigating effect on the food security of these two income groups.

¹⁹ World Bank, "Balancing Economic Adjustment and Transformation" <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/russia/publication/rer>

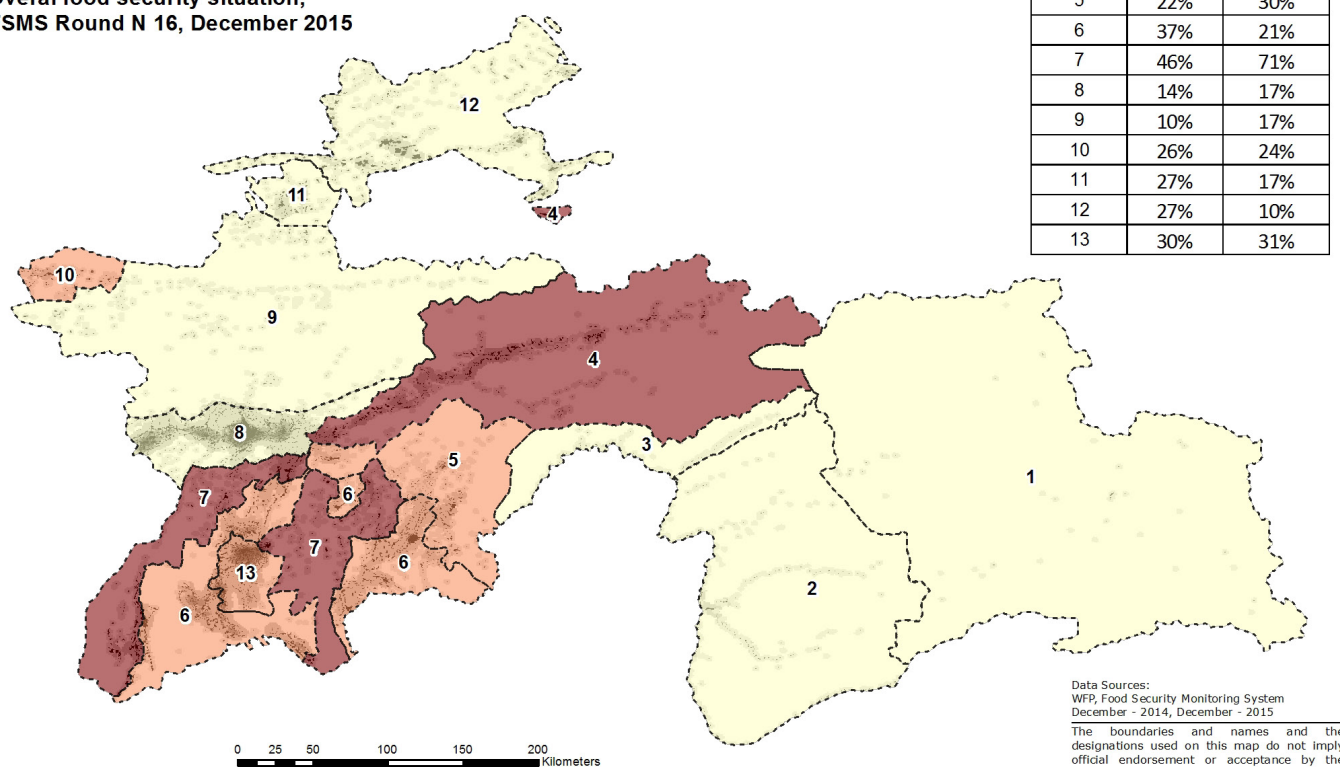
²⁰ World Bank, Climate change knowledge portal http://sdwebx.worldbank.org/climateportal/index.cfm?page=country_historical_climate&ThisRegion=Asia&ThisCCode=TJK

Overall food security situation,
FSMS Round N 14, December 2014



Zone	Dec-14	Dec-15
1	15%	20%
2	6%	6%
3	10%	17%
4	36%	56%
5	22%	30%
6	37%	21%
7	46%	71%
8	14%	17%
9	10%	17%
10	26%	24%
11	27%	17%
12	27%	10%
13	30%	31%

Overall food security situation,
FSMS Round N 16, December 2015



Data Sources:
WFP, Food Security Monitoring System
December - 2014, December - 2015
The boundaries and names and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

- 1 - Eastern Pamir Plateau Livestock Zone
- 2 - Western Pamir Valley Migratory Work Zone
- 3 - Western Pamir Irrigated Agriculture Zone
- 4 - Rasht Valley Irrigated Potato Zone

- 5 - Khatlon Mountain Agro-Pastoral Zone
- 6 - Southern Khatlon Cotton, Vegetable and Wheat Zone
- 7 - Khatlon Rainfed Wheat and Livestock Zone
- 8 - Central and Eastern Tajikistan Agro-Industrial Zone
- 9 - Eastern and Central Zeravshan Valley Agro-Pastoral Zone

- 10 - Panjakent Rice, Fruit and Vegetable Zone
- 11 - Ghonchi and Istaravshan Rainfed Cereal, Fruit, and Vegetable Zone
- 12 - North Sughd Agro-Industrial Zone
- 13 - Khatlon Agro-Industrial Peri-urban Zone

Food Security Situation Overview

Food Security Zones	Current status/action points	FS Trend compared to Dec 2014	3 months outlook	6 months outlook
Livelihood Zone 1: Eastern Pamir Plateau Livestock Zone	High percentage of households with poor and borderline food consumption and poor dietary diversity. High food and fuel prices.	↓	→	→
Livelihood Zone 2: Western Pamir Valley Migratory Work Zone	High percent of food expenditure. Severe weather conditions and consequent loss of harvest.	→	→	→
Livelihood Zone 3: Western Pamir Irrigated Agriculture Zone	High food and fuel prices. Dietary diversity deteriorated and reduced expenditures for health care.	↓	→	→
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. May deteriorate in remote areas due to seasonal rains, causing localized natural disasters.	↑	→	↑
Livelihood Zone 7: Khatlon Rain fed Wheat and Livestock Zone	High percentage of households with poor and borderline food consumption. Highest rate of food expenditures. High use of coping strategies. Low food stocks.	↓	→	→
Livelihood Zone 8: Central and Eastern Tajikistan Agro-Industrial Zone	The food security situation remains stable, but increased food expenditures.	↓	→	→
Livelihood Zone 9: Eastern and Central Zeravshan Valley Agro-pastoral Zone	High use of coping strategies. The food security situation remains stable. High percent of food expenditure.	↓	→	↓
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. Deteriorating trend of food consumption.	→	→	→

Trend

→ - No changes

↑ - Improvement

↓ - Deterioration

Current food security status

Food secure

Marginally food secure

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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