HIGHLIGHTS

• One third of the Afghan population remains food insecure despite the expected higher wheat harvest for 2016
• Locust infestation will halve the harvest of the Dawlatyar district located in Ghor, the most food insecure Afghan province
• Farmers forced to flee their homes and livelihoods due to increasing conflict in Baghlan
• Clashes threaten harvesting in Kot
• WFP and Afghanaid deliver food assistance to the most vulnerable in remote areas of Afghanistan

FOOD SECURITY IN AFGHANISTAN

Positive harvest expected for a fifth year in a row, while one third of Afghans remain food insecure

Wheat harvest in Afghanistan is expected to be slightly higher in 2016 than 2015 according to the Pre-Harvest Assessment released by WFP, FAO and FEWS NET in June 2016. Despite a dry winter and lower rainfall, thanks to otherwise favorable weather conditions, moderate temperatures and less flooding than last year, families across Afghanistan may experience an increase in crop production and agricultural outputs this year.

For the last decade one third of Afghans have been continuously food insecure, according to the National Risk Vulnerability Assessment. The Pre-Harvest Assessment lists the underlying causes for the ongoing food insecurity as a result of: war, continued unemployment, reduced labor wages, and the increasing cost of livestock, which have all taken its toll on the people of Afghanistan.

Food production in Afghanistan in the last four years has yielded a consistent grain harvest. For 2016, wheat production is again expected to be slightly above that of last year. Although agricultural output may be higher, many displaced people affected by conflict along with households hit by natural disasters such as flash floods, plant diseases and pests can experience acute food insecurity. For the newly displaced, humanitarian assistance is required as many have lost their homes, access to land and livelihoods. From January to June this year more than 149,000 individuals fled their houses due to conflict from 29 out of 34 provinces in Afghanistan.

The objectives and main findings of the Pre-Harvest Assessment

This Pre-Harvest Assessment was conducted during April and May 2016 by WFP, FAO and FEWS NET, supported by the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) and funded by USAID. The assessment set out to address three objectives: 1) determine key areas of concern that may affect food security outcomes; 2) identify possible risk factors that may cause acute food insecurity and 3) detect the status of upcoming wheat harvests.

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For the last decade one third of Afghans have been continuously food insecure, according to the National Risk Vulnerability Assessment (see Food Security chart). The Pre-Harvest Assessment lists the underlying causes for the ongoing food insecurity as a result of: war, continued unemployment, reduced labor wages, and the increasing cost of livestock, which have all taken its toll on the people of Afghanistan.

Food production in Afghanistan in the last four years has yielded a consistent grain harvest for five years in a row.

Food production in Afghanistan from 2003 to 2016 showing consistent grain harvest for five years in a row.


HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN FUNDING

393 million requested (US$)
113 million received (US$)
(Reflects funding on Financial Tracking Service as of 12 July 2016)
Source: http://fts.unocha.org

For more on funding, see page 8.
Afghanistan has always relied on importing food to make up the difference between consumption and production. This explains another key finding of the assessment which indicates that the recent winter wheat harvest in Pakistan and the spring wheat harvest in Kazakhstan are both expected to be sufficient to allow normal trade flows of wheat and wheat flour into Afghanistan at stable prices. Furthermore, the wheat harvest is reported to increase food availability at the household level and drive down prices in the markets.

The assessment also stresses the timely availability and accessibility of quality agricultural inputs (improved seed, fertilizer, hand tools and chemicals) as well as the improvement and strengthening of veterinary and agricultural extension services.

While the report reflects the situation of crops from April to May 2016, MAIL will provide specific wheat production estimates in its post-harvest report expected by the end of July 2016. A second report based on data analysis from the 2016 Seasonal Food Security Assessment (SFSAs) is due to be released at the end of July 2016.

The 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan targets the needs of 1.8 million food insecure people in Afghanistan. As of March 2016, the humanitarian community has assisted 405,000 people with food and nutritional support since the beginning of 2016.

Locust infestation hits Afghanistan’s most food insecure province

A locust infestation which broke out at the beginning of June is expected to halve the harvest of Dawlatyar district, located in Ghor, the most food insecure province of Afghanistan. An initial assessment from the provincial Department of Agriculture Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL) estimates that the crops of around 1,000 farmers would be affected by the locust infiltration.

While the infestation broke out in early June, the delivery of 1,000 litres of pesticides provided by the Ministry of Agriculture Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) reached Ghor province only on 21 June.

DAIL and local farmers started their spraying campaign in late June. The campaign is currently ongoing while the locust are reportedly moving east towards Pushtai Noor and Somak areas bordering Lal Wa Sarjangal district. DAIL estimates the amount of pesticides to be sufficient to contain the infestation.

This locust infestation is a concrete example of what is indicated in the Pre-Harvest Assessment report in that “timely availability and accessibility of quality agricultural inputs (including chemicals) are crucial.”
The locust started attacking our farms early June and pesticide was not available locally to control the locust. Farmers who had money went to market and bought pesticide, but our crops were destroyed as we were not able to purchase the chemicals. The DAIL sent pesticide but it reached us late,” said a farmer in Ghor.

The majority of families in Ghor rely on rain-fed agriculture land and their primary source of staple food is from their own crops.

The OCHA team visited the locust infested district to gather preliminary information on the farmers’ needs and required humanitarian assistance. Despite the initial estimation and assessment, some issues remain unclear: 1) the risks of further contamination; 2) whether or not the amount of available pesticides is sufficient to cover a second infestation; 3) whether food assistance will be required to support families through the winter.

FAO is leading an initial consultation by the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC) partners in mid-July to see the impact of the locust infestation, the need for an assessment and any possible response. “We are going to the field to verify the information in order to gauge if assistance is needed,” said Abdul Majid, FAO Afghanistan Cluster Coordinator. The detailed assessment will examine the impact on the current and next harvests as well as the needs of the affected communities and a response plan will be developed accordingly. MAIL is intending to pre-position an additional 1,000 litres of pesticide for the next season to control any potential future locust infestation.

Farmers forced to flee in Baghlan

Since the beginning of 2016, the district of Dandi Ghori, located in Baghlan, a province in northeastern Afghanistan, has experienced continued conflict. At the peak of the hostilities, up to 280,000 people were reportedly temporarily displaced.

The Dandi Ghori district relies heavily on agricultural produce and animal husbandry for livelihood. The continuous conflict has prevented the communities from cultivating or/and harvesting their lands, threatening their access to food, in particular in the coming months.

During the month of June, fighting in the Dandi Ghori area reportedly left 70,000 people displaced when they fled for refuge to various neighbouring areas, primarily Pul-e-Khumri.

The Dandi Ghori district of Baghlan in northeastern Afghanistan, has experienced continued conflict. At the peak of the hostilities, up to 280,000 people were reportedly temporarily displaced.
Despite reports that no humanitarian aid had been provided to the families in Dandi Ghori, assistance reports from different partners indicated that 9,212 displaced people received food, household items and blankets from the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) and the Government. Yet, a significant amount of IDPs would be in need of assistance, in particular those who remain in the Dandi Ghori area, to which access is restricted.

The need for humanitarian assistance was brought to the attention of the UN by a prominent elder of the Dandi Ghori community. The elder explained that due to the conflict, up to 50,000 acres of land could not be cultivated by the farmers and therefore no harvest would be expected for this year.

Following the meeting with the Dandi Ghori community leader, the UN is working to support access for partners in conducting a needs assessment in mid-July so as to be able to provide humanitarian assistance to the 70,000 reportedly displaced people.

### Kot conflict threatens food security

Nearly 3,500 people have been internally displaced as a result of the heavy fighting in the last week of June between Daesh and government forces in the Kot district of Nangarhar, in Eastern Afghanistan.

The escalated conflict led to the deaths of three civilians and 13 injured. Furthermore, at least 30 houses were burnt, leading to the loss of livestock and livelihoods. Continuing military operations could lead to further displacement.

Increased clashes broke out on the 24 June. Following coordination with the provincial authorities, humanitarian partners begun the assessment of the numbers and needs of the displaced on the 26 June. Assistance started to be delivered on the 30 June and is expected to be fully delivered in the next two weeks.

“Families have been forced to spend the Eid festivities far from their homes, anxious about whether they would be able to return to their lands on time for harvesting or whether they will have a house to return to,” as reported by a humanitarian aid worker.
UNFPA, WFP, UNMACA provided also a package of assistance to some injured civilians (under the Afghanistan Civilian Assistance Programme - ACAP III).

NRC and DRC will be providing cash for food and household items to eligible as part of the ECHO-funded Emergency Response Mechanism (ERM).

The ERM is a partnership of seven organisations - DRC, NRC, PIN, DACAAR, ACF, Solidarites International and ACTED - which provides humanitarian assistance in the form of cash for food with extra support for displaced families to additional needs for their families. Cash distribution is done when the local market is functional and the amount of cash given is linked to the market rate.

“Cash is flexible and empowers people,” says Marco Menestrina, ERM Coordinator, Danish Refugee Council (DRC).

Life-saving food support reaches the most vulnerable and remote families

Afghanistan is a country of contrasts. From the remote areas in mountains of the northern province of Badakhshan to the valleys of the Southern province of Uruzgan, humanitarian organisations are overcoming challenges to deliver life-saving food assistance to the most vulnerable communities.

The CHF-funded Afghanaid emergency assistance programme in Badakhshan provided cash for food to earthquake survivors. Families in remote areas received US$380 per family for five months. Through the programme, a total 14,448 people in of the six hardest hit earthquake affected districts on the eastern side of the province received cash to rehabilitate their houses.

“We found women, men and children who were helpless after the earthquake. This project was a remedy for these families, so they could repair their damaged homes before the harsh winter months,” said Saleman Khasisyar, Badakhshan Programme Manager for Afghanaid.

Afghanaid also provided food assistance for around 7,000 conflict displaced people in three districts in Badakhshan. They hoped to assist those in the Warduj district, but due...
Amidst harsh winter weather, Afghanistan delivered food to displaced families in Badakhshan. Source: Afghanaid

to insecurity and road access constraints, people could not receive the three-month provision of food for families, who lost their crops and their harvest.

“During this critical time, some families were in the open air. The food packages provided made up of cooking oil, wheat flour, beans and salt helped the families until they could return home,” Khasiisyar said.

Similar to Afghanistan, WFP also faced substantial access constraints and challenges in delivering food aid to families in war-torn areas and hard to reach places in Badakhshan. In order to distribute emergency food assistance to 2,310 individuals in Wakhan/Pamir districts, WFP carried out an extremely challenging journey; food packages were sent from Faizabad to Ishkashim in Badakhshan and transported through the border into Tajikistan back into Badakhshan. Despite the difficult road access difficulties, WFP provided the much needed food to more than 300 Kyrgyz families.

In the Southern province of Uruzgan, WFP recently was also able to reach 6,930 people with 120 metric tons of mixed food in Khas Uruzgan, a location which has been cut off from humanitarian assistance for seven years. Now WFP is successfully providing food to economically stressed populations in the area. “WFP’s mandate is well-recognized around Afghanistan and though access to insecure areas of the country takes a large amount of time and energy, it is not impossible,” said Claude Jibidar, WFP Country Director for Afghanistan.

**HEAT assessment tool launched on 1 June**

The Household Emergency Assessment Tool (HEAT) is a multi-sector emergency response tool to assess emergency assistance in Afghanistan. Launched on the 1 June, HEAT is the first of its kind in Afghanistan and builds upon years of experience in field assessments by the ECHO-funded Emergency Response Mechanism (ERM) NGOs. It has been adapted by OCHA incorporating the expertise of key UN partners, including WFP. The HEAT is a simplified and standardised tool to streamline emergency assessments and constitutes an initial assessment tool, while follow up sector-specific assessments will be necessary to determine any further needs. The form is available in three different formats: a standard PDF for hand-written entry, a computer-based and a digital formatted one.

The HEAT has been endorsed by the Humanitarian Country Team as the agreed tool for all emergency assessments. The agreement to use this single tool has been the result of months of work by the Humanitarian Coordinated Assessments Working Group. This group was set up at the request of the Humanitarian Coordinator and the Humanitarian Country Team. All humanitarian partners are requested to use this tool and invited to attend the formal trainings on the use of HEAT which will be rolled out across all the regions starting in August 2016.

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| Source | Afghanistan Humanitarian Bulletin |

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For more information on the HEAT, please visit https://goo.gl/0xiaqX
Humanitarian access: aid workers incidents

INCIDENTS IN JAN-JUNE 2016

107 Incidents
10 Aid workers killed
13 Aid workers wounded
88 Aid workers abducted
19 Incidents against health facilities and workers

Incidents against aid workers & assets - January to May 2016. Data sources: Various
Funding

The global humanitarian funding for Afghanistan currently stands at US$255 million to provide life-saving assistance through the United Nations, International Organizations, the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement and humanitarian partners.

The Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) is part of the global humanitarian funding for Afghanistan. The HRP is funded to date at US$113 million or 29 per cent of the US$393 million requirement.

As far as food security is concerned, during the first quarter of 2016, a total of US$98 million has been reported as received by the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC) partners in country, compared to the US$110 million FSAC financial requirements for 2016.

FASC’s priorities for 2016 remain: assisting the most vulnerable in conflict and natural disaster affected displaced persons, refugees and returnees with delivery of emergency food aid; and access to land and productive assets for livelihood support to prevent livelihood depletion.

Afghanistan Common Humanitarian Fund: a total of US$43.2 million has been pledged to the CHF in 2016. The most recent contribution of US$2.3 million was received in June from the Government of Norway. The £12 million (US$15.9 million) donation from DFID will take place in September and December and may be affected by the changes in the foreign exchange rate.

For more information, please see the link to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan: First Quarter Report

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