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Fighting Hunger Worldwide

bulletin

Tajikistan

Food Security Monitoring System

The Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS) provides a seasonal snapshot of food insecurity in rural Tajikistan by analyzing data from 665 households and 475 key informants every quarter. The FSMS can signal incidents of critical food insecurity and nutrition. This round focuses on the period from November 2010 to April 2010 coinciding with the winter seasons.

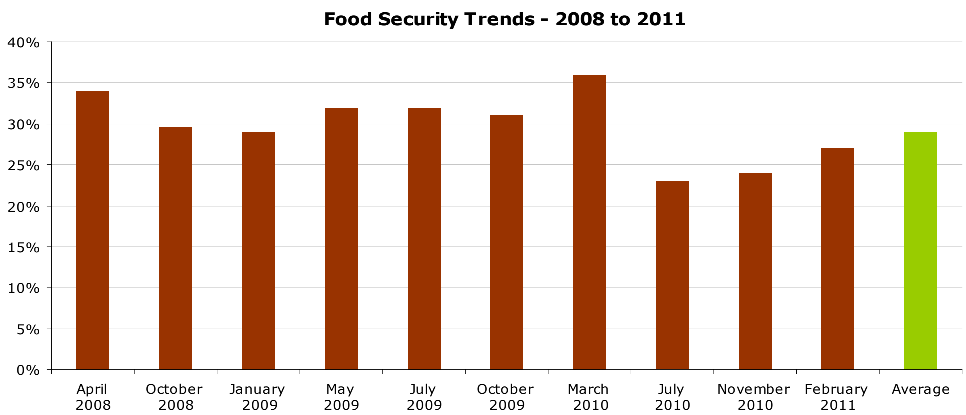
Overview of household food security between November 2010 and April 2011

• OVERALL FOOD SECURITY SITUATION IS SIMILAR to three months ago with around 28% of the households interviewed being food insecure. The situation is particularly serious for households not cultivating crops and living in remote areas of the Rasht and Zarafshan Valleys.

• THE NEW STAPLE FOOD PRICES CRISIS represents the main threat to households' food security. The cost of the minimum food basket is at its highest: TJS 130/USD 28 per person per month compared to TJS 110/USD 24 only three months ago.

• HIGH FUEL PRICES drive food and non-food prices' inflation much higher than expected pushing more households into poverty and food insecurity

• ACUTE MALNUTRITION MIGHT BE RISING TO ALARMING LEVELS as dietary diversity and frequency of meals is compromised by high prices. There are no signs of improvement in the short and medium term if assistance is not provided.



Outlook for the coming months (April to July 2010)

Overall, **food security is not expected to improve** until after the next wheat and potato harvests later in the second half of the year.

The **nutrition situation should be closely monitored** in the coming months as food consumption is reported to be quite low compared to usual and malnutrition is traditionally highest in the lean and early harvest season (April to August).

Food security in the country during the lean season will depend mostly on **four factors**:

1. **Fuel and food prices** have continued to increase. It is unlikely that the situation will change in the coming months as prices traditionally increase in the lean season, especially fuel used for the harvest. The impact of high prices on households' food security at this season cannot be stressed enough. WFP, IMF, FAO and the World Bank do not forecast any decrease in prices in the coming months.
2. **Remittances** will be determinant for households and should be monitored closely. Without remittances, households will continue to engage in selling assets or reducing essential expenses such as health.
3. **Wheat harvest**: the harvests in Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation will be key in the next months. Wheat production is forecasted to be good in Kazakhstan (14.5 million metric tones against 9.7 last year) which should help mitigate high prices in Tajikistan. The results of the crop assessment in Tajikistan are still to be published.
4. The **frequency and intensity of disasters** as households enter the 'disaster season'. According to REACT and the Government, risks of flooding are at low to medium levels more or less in all river basins. Locusts might be a bigger problem for households in Khatlon.

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Focus on most food insecure zones between November 2010 and April 2011

Zone and districts	Food insecurity level*		Specific shocks and factors	Chronic food security factors – all zones
	This round	Last year		
Zone 17 – Jirgatol, Tojikobod, Rasht	76% ↓	51%	• 80% report 'much worse' economic situation than last year • 49% of respondents declare having lost their food stocks and savings • 40% cannot send migrants to Russia due to ticket costs and high debts • Lowest dietary diversity in the country, children under 5 eat only 2 meals a day. High Coping Strategy Index • Main livelihood: agriculture but less own livestock than last year	**Food Availability** - Harsh weather conditions (drought) - Poor access to irrigation water - Reduced harvest compared to 2010 - Lack of seeds - Lack of capital and access to credit **Food Access** - High food prices - Lack of permanent jobs - High dependence on markets for food - High level of indebted house-holds **Food Utilization** - Poor access to drinking water - Increased percentage of households reporting health problems in winter - Insufficient access to health - Reduced expenditures on health and drugs - Poor dietary diversity - Poor knowledge of feeding and care practices **Other** - Low education of household head
Zone 11 - K. Mastchoh, Aini, South Pendjakent	46% ↓	3%	• 40% of interviewees with poor food consumption • Less than 2 meals per day for adults and children under 5 • 63% of households do not possess food stocks or livestock (40%)s • 89% take new debts in the past three months (highest CSI) • Main livelihood: remittances (46%) of the households	
Zone 5 - Khuroson, Yovon, Jomi	46% ↑	68%	• 25% with 'much worse' economic situation than last year • 48% report often not meeting food needs • 54% have not recovered from their main shock	
Zone 13 – Nurobod, Tavildara	37% ↓	15%	• 71% report impossibility to send migrants in past 3 months • 14% have poor food consumption and less than 2 meals /day/adults • 63% report often not meeting food needs • 29% have no livestocks (increase compared to last year) • 81% of the household budget is spent on food	
Zone 2 – Mastchoh	34% ↓	20%	• Less than 2 meals per day for adults and children under 5 • 46% report often not meeting food needs • 60% have not recovered from main shocks • 69% of the household budget is spent on food	
Zone 9 – Temurmalik	32% ↑	45%	• High levels of livestock diseases • 51% of households do not possess food stocks • Main source of income: pension and government salaries • Very high reliance on markets for food • 79% of the household budget is spent on food	
Zone 15 – Fayzobod, Vahdat, Varzob	32% ↑	57%	• 62% have reduced access to credit compared to last year • 25% with 'much worse' economic situation than last year • 46% report often not meeting food needs leading 100% to take debts • 69% of households do not possess food stocks	
Zone 1 - Qumsangir	31% ↓	22%	• One third report illness/accident/death of a working household member • 14% have poor food consumption and 20% have a poor food access • 54% took new debts in the past three months • Main livelihoods: agriculture and remittances • 80% report not having recovered from main shocks in past 3 months	

* The Food Insecurity level is calculated by cross tabulating income sources and food consumption of a household and by combining severe and moderate food insecurity. The full methodology is available at http://untj.org/files/library/Emergency_Food_Security_Assessment_in_Rural_Areas_of_Tajikistan_2008.pdf, p. 23. The levels presented here are indicative and representative for the interviewed population only. Results are for the 665 households interviewed in February 2011.

Context

Tajikistan faces a similar situation than in 2008 with high food prices and energy crisis (high fuel and gas prices, low electricity production that started in the spring).

The last bulletin in November reported the price increase for food and fuel as the main threat for food security in the country. Since, the situation has worsened and prices have reached higher levels than at the peak of the 2008 crisis. WFP together with FEWS Net have conducted a market study to better understand how the market functions and better understand causes and solutions to this new crisis.[*]

The electricity situation, which was not a concern at the time of data collection, has now become a serious impediment for livelihoods and businesses in rural and urban areas.[†]

The forthcoming wheat harvest is under assessment by the Ministry of Agriculture but preliminary results in several districts show important losses of harvest due to lack of rains in the fall, frosts and diseases (especially for trees). As per the recommendations of the Ministry of Agriculture, cotton might soon planted in more areas than during previous years possibly competing for irrigated lands with wheat and other food crops, increasing fears of a low wheat harvest.

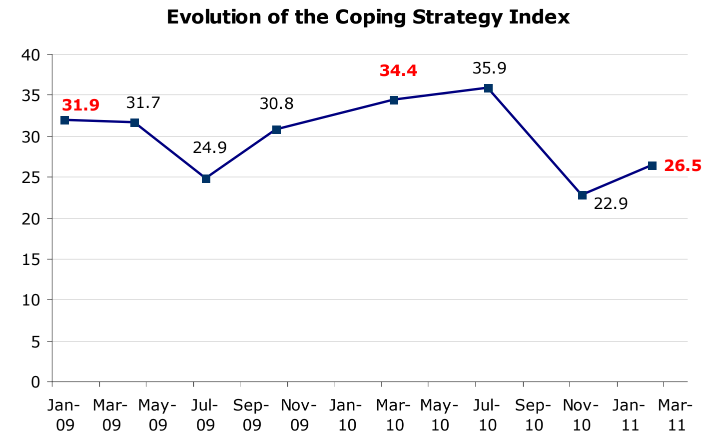
The food security law was approved by the Parliament late December 2010. The law calls for the creation of a Food Security Council. WFP and the members of the Development Coordination Council are assisting the Government in better coordinating and strategizing food security interventions in the country according to the law.

Shocks[‡]

While last year high food prices represented the main shock for 34% of the households, this round 63% reported inflation as their main preoccupation. Compared to November 2010, this is 13 percent points more. Results show an increased in serious illness or accident of a working household member (8%) compared to last year and previous round but this is not unusual in the winter season. More unusual is the proportion of households reporting difficulties to send migrants to Russia (11% of the households) in the past three months. This particular difficulty has not been seen since the financial crisis and could have serious repercussion on households' ability to access food in the months to come, especially in zones 2 (Mastchoh), 5 (Khuroson), 6 (Vanj), 11 (Ayni), 12 (Isfara), 13 (Nurobod), 14 (Tursunzoda), and 15 (Fayzobod). It is not clear how much this is linked to the increase of fuel and food prices but discussions with communities show that the prices of tickets to Russia and the lack of access to credit from relatives and banks are the main causes of this new development.
Severe weather conditions were also reported more frequently, in particular the lack of precipitation that has affected most of the country in the fall and beginning of the winter.

Chronic shocks such as the lack of access to drinking and irrigation water and the lack of jobs were among the main concerns of the households interviewed. The impact of the lack of drinking and irrigation water on food security in the country is not well know and hard to assess. More research is needed in this field.

Coping strategies[§]



When the score is low, households use less coping harming their food consumption. Winter periods are higlighted in red for comparison.

Compared to last year at the same period the coping strategy index (CSI) has improved: households use less frequently harming coping strategies but the CSI deteriorated since last round. The high food prices have forced half of the households to rely on less preferred and less expensive food. Less households purchase food on credit than last round because evidence shows that they cannot take more credit and that shop keepers have limited the number of customers they give loans too. Households normally rely on alternative/complementary employment when facing difficult situations but this strategy is not successful in the winter as supply of casual labor is low.

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* See WFP Tajikistan Market Report – April 2011
† See Tajikistan Risk Monitoring and Warning Report – February 2011 and UNDP/DRMP Special report on low levels in Nurek Hydroelectric Reservoir and Spring Electricity Rationing in Tajikistan - March 2011
‡ Shocks are defined by an event that has a negative impact on food and nutrition security. Shocks can be natural or caused by human action

§ The coping strategy index takes into account the frequency of use of the most harmful coping mechanisms such as not eating during a full day or adults restricting their consumption to allow children to eat.

In the most food insecure areas households limit their food consumption, sometimes by restricting adults' consumption in order for children to eat enough or by eating seed stocks. For example, 37% of the households surveyed in Ayni district declared skipping entire days without eating at least 6 times a month. Also, in the same area, 66% of the families have reduced the number of meals eaten per day in the past three month. Finally, in Jirgatol and Tavildara, 100% of the households report having consumed their seed stocks, which could jeopardize even further their coming harvest of potato. This coping mechanism has been recorded in the Rasht Valley since October 2008.

Migration and remittances

As mentioned earlier, an incremental number of households this round have reported their inability to send migrants to Russia. This is the first time since the financial crisis of 2009-2010. More in-depth assessment would need to be conducted to comprehend the magnitude and impact of these results. In the meantime, 31% of the households interviewed continue to receive regular remittances. Confirming the high level of remittances recorded by the National Bank of Tajikistan and the IMF in 2010, money transfers are the main income for more than 25% of the households and main second income for 32% of the surveyed families.

Remittances also remain essential for the food security of the families receiving them; 67% used the funds received in priority to acquire food. This confirms findings of last round (63%) and that remittances are essential for building stocks before and during the winter season, especially at a time when food is becoming more expensive. It also shows that during winter months, priority is put even more on food as few households reported using them for health and construction like they did in November 2010.

Agriculture, livestock ownership and conditions

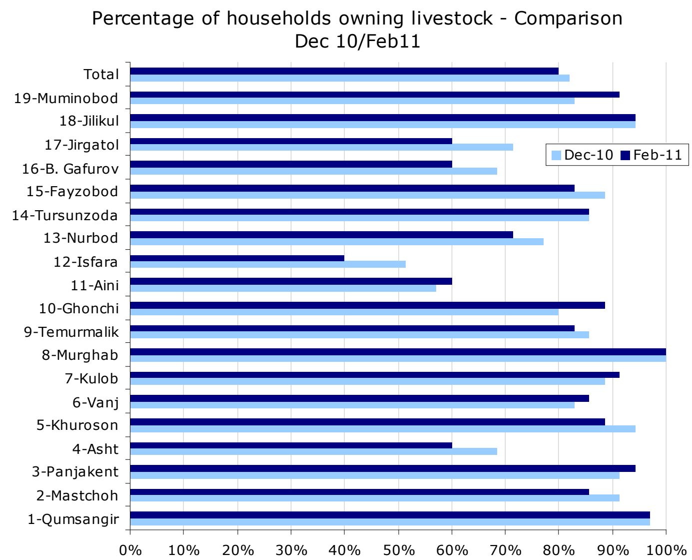
The results of the ongoing crop assessment conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture with support from FAO and other international organizations will be essential in understanding the impacts of the autumn drought on winter wheat harvest (change if results provided before publication). Very preliminary results show that up to 50% of the harvest was lost in some regions of the country (Rasht Valley and other mountainous areas). But these regions are not the main production areas of the country.

Given last years' high cotton prices and the MOA's recommendations, cotton hectares could increased over last year on irrigated lands devoted to wheat and food crops during the previous campaign.

Households cultivating orchards confirmed information from key informants that diseases in Sughd and the Valley are already impacting the coming harvest. More information is needed to further assess the real impact on production.

Other results are similar to the ones of last round: the main constraints in the agriculture sector are the lack of access to large land/acreage, the lack of irrigation water and quality seeds and seedlings.

Overall, livestock ownership is similar to last round and to last year: 80% of the households own farm animals. The main difference is that households in the most food insecure districts report owning less than last round, possibly confirming the excessive sales of livestock reported in order to cope with difficult situations. Prices of meat and live animals (cattle, poultry, and sheep/goat) have been above average so household could use this money for buying staple foods. Previous analysis has shown the importance of owning livestock to remain food secure. The state of pastures in the country has not been assessed yet but the lack of rain could mean that the availability of fodder will be reduced and its price higher in the months to come than last year. Loss of livestock, mostly due to seasonal diseases, were recorded in zone 8 (Murghab – 34% of livestock owners declared losing animals in the past three months), zone 13 (Nurobod – 54%), zone 17 (Jirgatol – 51%) and zone 19 (Muminobod – 34%).



Income and expenditures

Compared to before the winter, households interviewed spend more of their income on food (64% against 58%). This spending is usual for the season (65% in January 2009 and 63% in April 2010). While food prices have increased, one might have expected that expenditures on food would also increase. This only is true for households that have already used their initial coping strategies and are reducing expenses on other sectors such as health and clothing.

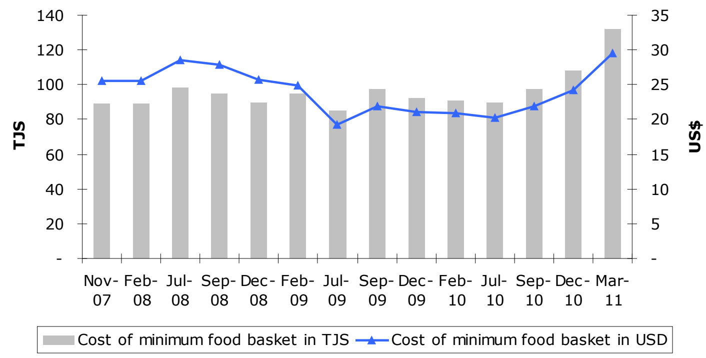
Moreover, households also had to bear the price increase in fuel which brought this essential expenditure to higher levels. Also, as explained above, households will focus on less preferred and less expensive food, trying to keep the level of expenditures on food to an acceptable level. Nonetheless, half of the households interviewed report that their spending is unusual for this period of the year. Expenditures on food have reached high proportions in several zones:

Expenditures on food out of the total household budget

Zone	Percentage
2-Mastchoh	69.6%
8-Murghab	71.5%
9-Temurmalik	78.8%
12-Isfara	73.2%
13-Nurbod	81.3%
14-Tursunzoda	69.5%
16-B. Gafurov	63.6%
19-Muminobod	74.3%
Total sample	**63.7%**

As mentioned above, remittances account for the main income source for this round like for the previous round. This additional influx of money might have helped mitigating the effects of the high food prices. The importance of daily wage labor is greatly reduced at this season as households might still find small casual labor but at a very low salary (5-10 TJS or 1-2$ per day). Instead, revenue come from agricultural and livestock sales (20% of the households), government salaries (13%) and pensions (11%). The latter is by far the second most important source of revenue for one third of the rural households. As stated last round, households whose livelihood depend mainly on incomes from the government or from casual labor find it hard to afford the minimum food basket. In November, the minimum food basket was estimated by WFP at TJS 110 ($24.5). Three months later, the cost of the minimum food basket has risen to over TJS 130 ($29.5) per person per month.

Cost of minimum food basket (per person per month)

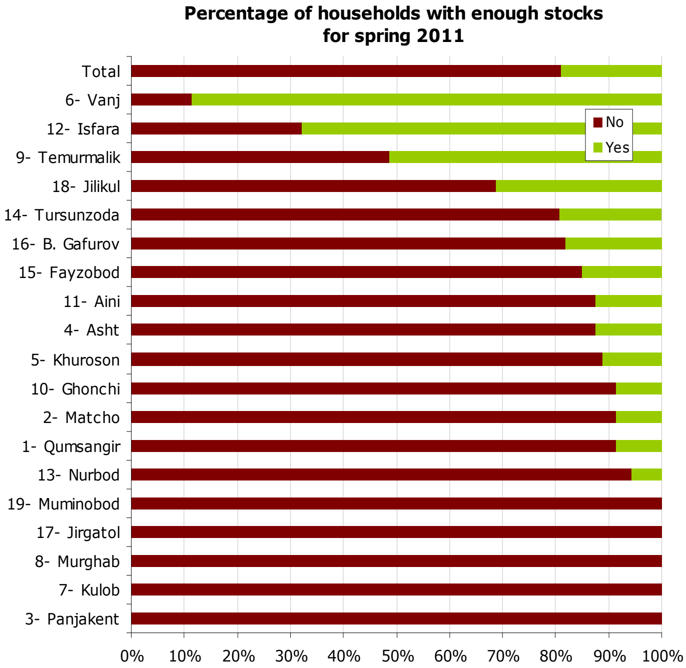


It means that at a time when households' stocks are depleted, the prices of basic staple foods are out of reach for many households (see more on food price in WFP/FEWS Net Tajikistan Market Report-April 2011). Looking at the differential between income, main expenditures and the cost of food basket, it appears that households in only two zones can meet their needs for an adequate food basket. In average, households are short by TJS 40 ($8.8) monthly to afford the minimum food basket (not including food acquired through own production, credit and gifts but at this season 90% of the food comes from the market). This estimate gives a good idea of the lack of access rural households are facing.

Zone - District	**Food Basket Gap**
1 - Qumsangir	-21.36
2 - Maschoh	-47.09
3 - Panjakent	-74.80
4 - Asht	-48.05
5 - Khuroson	-71.69
6 - Vanj	18.30
7 - Kulob	-42.19
8 - Murghab	-22.18
9 - Temurmalik	-69.51
10 - Ghonchi	-56.88
11 - Aini	-47.68
12 - Isfara	-42.81
13 - Nurbod	-63.47
14 - Tursunzoda	0.61
15 - Fayzobod	-29.50
16 - B. Gafurov	-55.55
17 - Jirgatol	-23.15
18 - Jilikul	-31.18
19 - Muminobod	-15.29
Total	**-39.13**

Debts taken this round are for bigger amounts than last year as 51% of the households who contracted debts borrowed more than TJS 500 ($111). Most loans still come from relatives and friends (55% of the credit taken) followed by banks (31%). This is very similar to last round. Debts from relatives are usually given without conditions.

Food sources, food stocks and markets



The current food price crisis started before the winter when migrants where coming back with fairly good remittances. This allowed households to plan their stocks in accordance and store more this winter than last year. This explains why 84% of the households report in February having food stocks. Nonetheless, the actual quantity of food stocks is lower than last year in winter. At the time of the interviews, wheat stocks were reported to last another 3 weeks (4.5 weeks last year) and less households stored oil this year (65% compared to 75%). Food stocks for households living in zone 9 (Temurmalik – 51% of the interviewees did not have food stocks at all), zone 11 (Ayni – 37%) and zone 15 (Fayzobod – 31%) are particularly low.

In April 2010, 80% of the households reported not having sufficient stocks for the spring. This year, 82% of the households will not be able to stock enough for the months to come. In ten districts, more than 90% of the families interviewed reported not having enough for the spring (last year only 8 districts were in such a situation).

As three fourth of the stocks come from the market, the lack of income was the main reason for the insufficient stocks, only 6% of the households blamed it on their poor harvest. 61% of the households in zone 13 (Nurobod) related their lack of stocks to their lack of storage. While last round households were getting more than two thirds of their food from markets and 20% from their own production, this round the winter season forces households to rely more on the market as own production reduces.

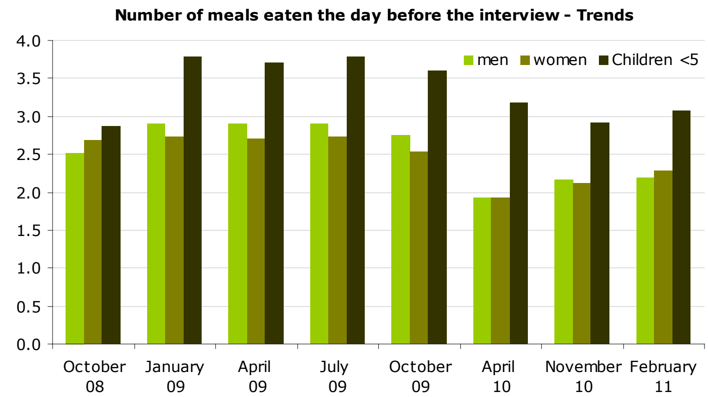
Food consumption

At this season, food consumption is normally deteriorating as households have less access to their own production, a less wide range of food products such as fruits and vegetables is available and stocks start to decrease. This round confirms this tendency for most districts as the dietary diversity of most households is lower than last round and similar to last year.

Number of times food items are consumed the week before the interview

Dietary Diversity Group	Cereals and tubers	Beans, lentils, peas, nuts	Vegetables	Fruits	Meats	Milk products	Sugar, honey, jam, candies	Oil, fats	Condiments
November 2010	7.0	1.8	4.2	2.2	2.4	3.2	5.9	6.4	2.8
February 2011	7.0	1.6	3.6	1.0	2.4	3.3	6.1	6.4	2.3

Nonetheless, diversity of the meals is only one indicator. Quantity of meals eaten per day has reduced compared to last year especially for children under 5. In zone 2 (Mastchoh) children under 5 received only 1.5 meals per day and adults even less; 48% of the respondents revealed feeding their children only once the day before the interview! In the Rasht Valley, results show an important decrease in the number of meals since last round; children receiving at best 2 meals a day. The situation is similar in zones 5 (Khuroson) and 11 (Ayni). Only 6% of all the households interviewed report never having issues satisfying their families' food needs in the past three months.



Causes of household food insecurity¶ over the past three months

Remittances

For food security, receiving remittances is important especially if remittances represent a significant amount (or the only income). Remittances are also just a complement of income for the richer and most food secure.

¶ Severe food insecurity is a combinaison of poor food consumption and of poor food access. The full methodology can be found at http://untj.org/files/library/Emergency_Food_Security_Assessment_in_Rural_Areas_of_Tajikistan_2008.pdf, p. 23.

Food security on credit

Interestingly, food-secure households take bigger debts than food insecure households. This shows that food security status for many households in rural areas is highly connected to coping mechanisms and especially access to credit. Food secure households are also by definition richer and can afford bigger loans. Food insecure households took more new debts in the past three months. The reason for borrowing money is also different. Source of credit is also different.

	Severely food insecure	Moderately food insecure	Food secure households
For food	69%	76%	59%
For health expenses	31%	12%	19%
For animal feed, fodder, veterinary	0%	0%	1%
For agricultural inputs (seed, tools, etc.)	0%	1%	1%
For school, education costs	0%	0%	1%
For animals	0%	0%	2%
For migration	0%	3%	4%
For clothes, shoes	0%	0%	0%
For ceremonies	0%	4%	11%
For starting a business	0%	1%	2%
For constructions	0%	1%	1%

Severely food insecure households have both poor financial access to food and poor food consumption, while moderately food insecure households have either poor access or poor consumption.

Number of incomes counts

The type of income also has an impact on the food security status, but the level of the income seems the real determinant for rural households. Daily wage labor, pensions, remittances are all incomes for food insecure and food secure families. The difference is that food secure households receive more remittances, larger pensions and better rate for their labor. Also food secure households combine more number of income-generating activities than food insecure families.

Nutrition is a major concern

Although no data was collected for nutrition this round, qualitative reports from discussions with medical staff in regions and several partners point toward a severe degradation of the nutritional status of children and women in Tajikistan at the beginning of the lean season. In particular, medical reports and qualitative evidence from districts in the Rasht Valley show alarming rates of malnutrition in pregnant women and their babies. Taking into consideration the actual high food prices, low dietary diversity, low frequency of meals and the prospects of a reduced harvest, the situation will most probably continue to deteriorate.

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The results of the FSMS bulletin feed into the IPC analysis every three months and are used by WFP and partners to better target their interventions. The methodology used for this bulletin is in line with WFP's corporate methodology on food security assessments.

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