

YEMEN FOOD SECURITY UPDATE

September 2017

ALMOST THREE QUARTERS OF YEMEN POPULATION FACE STARVATION AS FOOD SECURITY CONTINUES TO WORSEN**KEY MESSAGES**

- Large-scale acute food insecurity continues worsening. October/November harvest will most likely not offset the local food production deficits. According to FAO cereal production thematic study conducted in seven governorates¹, the cultivated land under rain fed condition decreased by 11%, while irrigated land under cereals decreased by 40% compared with pre - crisis period.
- As of August 2017, 67 districts in 13 governorates are the worst affected by the highest food insecurity, malnutrition and Cholera out of the 95 highly prioritized districts by Food Security/Agriculture and Nutrition clusters.
- 1.25 million Civil servants and their families face destitution, economic pain and poor food purchasing power, as their salaries are irregularly paid for past 11 months.
- An estimate of 3,590,051 MT of key basic food commodities out of which 68% wheat grains, 10.7% Rice and 9% sugar were imported through Al Hodeidah, Assalief, Aden and Al Mukalla sea ports. Compared to the quantities imported during January – August 2017 to same period in 2016, there was an increase of wheat grain imports by 30%.
- Estimated 2.4 million children under the age of five and Pregnant and Lactating women are acutely malnourished and face an increased risk of morbidity and death.
- Outbreak of Cholera further aggravates food insecurity of the vulnerable population. In the last four and half months (since April 2017), around 700,000 cholera cases and 2,091 associated deaths have been reported countrywide.

1.0 Overview of Agricultural livelihoods

Yemen's central highlands, the southern uplands and the western coastal areas of the Tihamah plateau are the core areas for the production of sorghum, millet, vegetables, fruits, and other cash crops². Local livestock production covers more than 60% of the livestock products needs while poultry sector covers near 100% of the country eggs need. Agriculture sector is already heavily constrained by challenges of water shortage, which is the most crucial issue in Yemen and further aggravated by the shortage and high price of fuel for irrigation exacerbated by crisis. According to the National Agricultural Statistics before the current ongoing crisis, Yemen had 1.61 million hectares of arable land, 608 thousand hectares were under rain fed, and 743 thousand hectares were under irrigation system including spate irrigation (MAI 2014). According to thematic studies carried by FAO in May/June 2017 in main cereal producing areas within Tihamah and highlands (Northern and Central), the cultivated land under rain fed decreased by 11%, while irrigated land under cereals decreased by 40% compared with pre-crisis period. Overall cereal production decreased mainly due to protracted insecurity, reduced access to land, lack of high cost of agricultural inputs (seeds, fuel for irrigation, fertilizer and machinery) and increased prevalence of crop pests and diseases.

Similar to crop production, livestock thematic studies report during the same period (May/June) has shown reduction in production particularly small ruminants. The production reduction of small ruminants was 25% for both sheep and goats in 2017 compared to pre-crisis (MAI estimated 2014). The reasons for decreased production was 34% due to combination of low demand and epidemic

¹ FAO-FSIS thematic area studies in 7 governorates of Al-Hudeidah, Al-Mahweet, Amaran, Sana'a, Dhamar, and Ibb in July 2017

² Local crop production in Yemen covers around 25-30% of the needs either from cereal and/or from horticulture production, while the country imports larger percentage of food commodities with 90% wheat requirements from imports. Additionally, the agriculture sector employees more than 50% of the workforce in the country either directly or indirectly.

Enhancement of Food Security and Resilient Livelihoods Programme (EFRLP)

برنامج تحسين الأمن الغذائي و صمود سبل العيش

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البرنامج تمويل الاتحاد الأوروبي وتنفيذ منظمة الأغذية والزراعة للأمم المتحدة (الفاو) بالتعاون مع السكرتارية الفنية للأمن الغذائي في وزارة التخطيط والتعاون الدولي

diseases, 31% due to combination of diseases and higher costs of inputs, 25% stated that the cause may be due to epidemic diseases and high cost of inputs and finally, few of the respondents (10%) mentioned other causes. In addition, breeding management, animal husbandry, and marketing were identified as important constraints to the development of livestock production. Currently, high prices of animal feed, forage, and animal health inputs (veterinary drugs and vaccines) are highly affecting both smallholder and commercial livestock production.

Markets are very crucial for both smallholder and commercial farmers, where they can sell their products and purchase their farming inputs. Both the commercial and smallholder farmers have limited market channels for their products. More than half (52%) of the communities do not have local market within their areas for selling their livestock and due to the conflict and insecurity some of the operators are not freely moving resulting to malfunctioning of the markets. Accordingly, around 40% the rural communities' travel 6-20 kms to the nearest market centers while 19% travelled more than 20km to reach the nearest market centers. Physical access to the market is one of the main constraints in addition to economic access particularly in the conflict affected areas where there is active fighting.

2.0 Current food security situation

2.1 Food Availability

2.1.1 Local agriculture production

Crop: Agriculture in Yemen follow the bimodal rainy seasons - March to May and July to September. The first rains started on time but were poor and much less than last previous year and even less than the country ten years' average (2001-2010) in some governorates. Normally, the peak of the first rainy season in the northern and central highlands is in April, but this year it never peaked. The same pattern for the second rainy season in the highlands, it started with the good rains in July in most of the highland governorates, but was less than the last year. Therefore, it is expected that the agriculture production season in 2017 will be effected in particular the lowlands areas that relies mostly on spate irrigation from the floods originating from the highlands zones. The spate irrigation in the lowlands thus covered fewer areas, which will affect local production. High diesel prices (increased by 70% in Tihamah for sorghum and between 58% and 69% for central and northern highlands) during this period has negatively affected underground pumping for irrigation. Compared to previous year (2016), where the rain was above normal and cereal production decreased by more than 30%, 2017 production is expected to be even much less.

In addition to the scarcity of rains, the protracted crisis and other, economic factors a major impediment to all farmers countrywide. Inaccessibility to farmlands in active conflict areas, high cost of inputs which increased by 25% (seeds, fertilizers etc.) while the price of diesel increased by over 50% in most governorates when compared to the pre-crisis, lack of extension services and displacements had further aggravated the local crop production. As consequence of armyworm infestation reported mainly in the Tihammah region, it would have an impact forage production, which has started affecting local forage market prices and impact negatively on the fragile food insecurity situation in the area. In addition to that, lack and high prices of Agriculture and livestock inputs and extension services continue to have it negative affect on farmer's production.

Livestock: As mentioned above this year, the pattern of the rainfall in both seasons has affected not only the crop production but also pastures in both highland and lowland governorates with lowlands suffering the most. Tihamah plateau is the main fodder producing area, which cultivated all the year around and depends on runoffs from the highlands. Normally, fodder is grown under spate (floods) and underground-irrigated conditions. This situation has led to less fodder in the market (Prices of fodder are high; a five kg punch of fodder is sold for 300 YR in the market). In addition, another major constrains facing the livestock producers is the limited livestock movement. Around 2 Million IDPs displaced due to the current conflicts including airstrikes, IDPs moved from all villages bordering areas with Saudi to the safest places in Hajjah and Hodiadah. The people that left their original places moved with their livestock subjecting the hosting communities' huge pressure on the pastures. Similarly, animal movement has potential of spreading diseases in particular lethal infections such as small ruminants plague (*Peste des Petits Ruminants* - PPR), sheep and goat pox and Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) as well as non-lethal diseases such as infestations of internal parasites, that highly effect the livestock production. With no veterinary disease surveillance and limited vaccination campaigns to protect the livestock assets, it is highly probable that the livestock production will be affected in this season.

2.1.2 Imported Commodities

An estimate of (3,590,051 MT) of key basic food commodities out of which 68% (2,456,865.00 MT) wheat grains, 10.7% (371,009.00 MT) Rice and 9% (338,402.00 MT) sugar were imported through Al Hodeidah, Assalief, Aden and Al Mukalla sea ports. Compared

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to the quantities imported during (January – August) of 2017 to same period in 2016, there was an increase of wheat grain imports by (30%). On other hand, governorates under active conflict and insecurity, the basic food and non-food commodities remains scarce and the availability is still challenging.³

Imported Food Commodities January - August 2017 (Metric Ton) through various sea ports					
Items	Hodeidah\Assalief	Al Mukalla	Aden	Total	(%)
Wheat grains	1,779,933.00	21,913.00	655,019.00	2,456,865.00	68%
Wheat flour	55,450.00	6,859.00	46,191.00	108,500.00	3%
Rice	61,524.00	47,580.00	261,905.00	371,009.00	10%
Sugar	213,756.00	44,779.00	79,867.00	338,402.00	9%
Cooking oil	48,245.00	8,882.00	12,374.00	69,501.00	2%
Milk products	5,660.00	235,750.00	4,364.00	245,774.00	7%
Total	2,164,568.00	365,763.00	1,059,720.00	3,590,051.00	100%
%	60%	10%	30%	100%	

The supply and import of wheat grains the main staple food in the country is better than the previous year. However, with near collapse of socio- economic systems and institutions, disrupted livelihoods, irregular salary payment, lack and high price of food, fuel and clean water, destroyed infrastructures and health systems, food security stability is at risk. Despite this, millions of poor Yemeni households lack the capacity to buy their minimum food needs. In 67 districts across 13 governorates, there is a convergence of evidence for the highest food insecurity, nutrition needs and cholera. These factors will together further have deteriorated the food insecurity situation countrywide and will increase the probability of hunger risk in particular in those 95 priority districts identified in May 2017 by both Food security and Nutrition clusters.

2.2 Food Accessibility

2.2.1 Market situations and prices of food commodities

Market supply and accessibility of food in particular imported food commodities improved in many governorates during the last six months. Better food accessibility during this period is attributable to the good level of imports during the first half of the year. According to FAO-EFRLP/MOPIC bulletin and WFP' Yemen Market Watch Report, in August, basic food and nonfood commodities were accessible in 11 governorates while it was scarcely available in the other 8 governorate main markets.⁴

The price of locally produced cereals and vegetables mainly depends on the seasonality. Average price of locally produced cereals across the FAO-EFRLP target governorates more or less remained stable except barley prices which sharply increased by 9.4% in August. However, the overall prices of locally produced cereals are still higher than the pre-crisis prices by 47% for Sorghum, 39% for Millet, 54% for Maize and by 91% for Barley. Whereas vegetables prices almost vary every month due to seasonality, local production, and forces of demand and supply in the markets according to Market monitoring bulletins produced by FAO-EFRLP project on monthly basis. The overall average prices of monitored imported food commodities across the targeted six governorates remained stable. However, August prices remained above pre-crisis levels by 31%, 33%, 46.8% and 80.76% for wheat grains, wheat flour, sugar, and rice respectively. Despite the availability of most basic food commodities, majority of households cannot access food due to its high prices and poor purchasing power. Resumption of social welfare support in August 2017 after a suspension of almost more than 2 years will contribute in improving the food access for those who totally relayed on it as a main source of income, regardless its small amount.

2.3 Food Utilization

2.3.1 Malnutrition and acute health and insecurity issues

³ FAO-EFRLP/FSTS bulletin and WFP' Yemen Market Watch Report August 2017

⁴ Basic food and nonfood commodities were available in the governorates of Mahrah, Mahweith, Amran, Ibb, Sana'a rural, Sana'a city, Al Hodeidah, Dhamar, Hadramout, Hajjah and Marib markets while it was experiencing scarcity in Taiz, Sa'ada, Al Jawf, Lahej, Ad Daleh, Al Bayda, Aden (Mainly Gas and fuel) and Shabwa.

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In the last four and half months (since April 2017), around 700,000 cholera cases and 2,091 associated deaths have been reported⁵. Despite the system-wide response that is being implemented and achievements reached, the magnitude of the cholera outbreak is beyond the capacity and reach of humanitarian organizations. According to Nutrition Cluster, (August 2017) about 2.4M children and pregnant and lactating mothers are in acute need for nutrition services. Nationwide, 10.4% of the population either displaced or facing the immediate challenges of return. Since the beginning of 2017, the ongoing conflict has resulted to 104,658 newly displaced IDPs, mostly from Taiz (46%) and Sa'ada (25%), while other include Al Hodeidah, Al Bayda and Al Jawf. The displaced persons have lost their livelihood means and required urgent humanitarian support to prevent further collapse of their food security situation.⁶

3.0 Livelihood interventions in the country

The ongoing humanitarian and developmental interventions are playing a crucial role in supporting livelihoods in Yemen especially in 2017. The two main humanitarian livelihood interventions currently implemented are Emergency livelihood and livelihood restoration interventions. Food Security and Agriculture Cluster partners are the main implementing entities of these livelihoods activities in 95 prioritized districts nationwide. Cumulatively, (January to August 2017), 675,000 beneficiaries have received emergency livelihoods assistance (agricultural, fisheries and livestock inputs support) and longer-term livelihood support (mainly Income Generating Activities) in eight governorates (Abyan, Al Dhalea, Al Hudaydah, Hajjah, Ibb, Lahj, Taizz and Saadah).

Since January 2017, FAO has provided livelihood assistance to around 45,000 thousand households spread in 47 districts throughout Yemen mainly through developmental projects funded by European Union (EU) and World Bank (WB). FAO livelihood support to vulnerable household's ranges from value chain addition to Small-scale dairy farming (majority women headed), small ruminant fattening, poultry production, beekeeping, cereal value chains, seed distribution and small ruminants restocking. The livelihood based interventions will also assist vulnerable population to reinstate their resilience to recover from disaster and shocks.

4.0 Conclusion

The protracted two and half years of conflict has severely worsened the socio- economic situation in the country leaving millions of poor households struggling to meet their minimum food requirement. The current situation and socio- economic indicators project further worsening of the overall food security situation in the country. The number of food insecure population continues to increase in the absence of any noticeable improvement of main food insecurity drivers. Lack of income, poor purchasing power in addition to the almost collapse public Health sector and lack of water and sanitation service exposed million vulnerable groups including poor HH, women and children to the cholera outbreak and other economic and environmental hazards. During the last four and half months, around 692,814 suspected cholera cases and 2,091 associated deaths claimed as per 19 September 2017 (Daily Epidemiological Update-eDEWS/WHO).

5.0 Recommendations for action

Despite the efforts of humanitarian actors to address the protracted crisis in the country, the poor households continue to suffer the impacts of food insecurity and malnutrition. The following are recommended as short to mid-term measures in the coming months.

- ✚ Reinstatement of the social and productive safety net programs and policies (public work programme) to reduce unemployment and support livelihoods. Resumption of the social welfare support in late August 2017 by UNICEF after a suspension for more than 2 years will contribute in improving food access for those who totally relied on it as a main source of income, regardless its small amount. However, there is huge need to expand the different safety net programmes and harmonize the standards and fulfil the household minimum requirements – the minimum food basket 24000YR/month endorsed by the FSAC.
- ✚ Scale up the food assistance (targeted and general food distribution), scale up the conditional and unconditional cash transfer to meet the unmet need. In August 2017, Food security and Agriculture Cluster reached to 7.7 Million (96%) beneficiaries with emergency food assistance (Food, cash or voucher systems). This leaves more than half of the targeted households without access to food assistance. As of August 2017, FSAC activities were only 33% funded by 31st August 2017 resulting to huge unmet needs and response gaps across priority governorates. Additional funding is urgently

⁵ 19 September 2017 -Daily Epidemiological Update-eDEWS/WHO

⁶ TFPMR 15 , July 2017

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needed to stop additional households sliding to more severe forms of food insecurity, considering the disrupted livelihoods and limited income due to meltdown of social and economic options.

- ✦ Expand the emergency livelihood assistance, which currently targets 3.3 Million and scale up livelihood restoration programs currently targeting 199,500 beneficiaries.
- ✦ Review the impact of existing strategies and approaches for the improvement of living conditions and resilience of vulnerable populations, especially small-scale rural producers, urban and rural poor as well as women and children.
- ✦ Prioritize the IDP and returnee households needs who are among the most vulnerable groups that require immediate attention to reinstate/restore their livelihoods as well as emergency food assistance.
- ✦ Availability of fresh data for evidence based analysis continued to challenge the food security analysis. Both state and state actors has to support and facilitate access for data collection to overcome the data gap and strengthen evidence based food security analysis at all levels.
- ✦ The latest agriculture census of Yemen was conducted in 2001/2002. Since then, the data and information on crop, livestock, beekeeping and fishery production, cultivated area, agriculture inputs and services is based on the annual expert's estimates. It is therefore important to design and conduct a comprehensive Post Harvest Assessment on the agricultural production in order to have a reliable data and information, which will improve planning, strategy formulation and policy directives.

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This update presents an overview of the food security situation in Yemen as of September 2017, proposing actions to address sustainable Food Security in the country.

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