Arab food security monitoring framework

Country reviews

Bahrain

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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

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Key Messages

The monitoring framework shows that obesity rates as well as rates of anaemia among women are elevated in Bahrain. The country devotes an excessive amount of water towards food production despite its growing scarcity. The country profile reviews the impact of COVID-19, early measures against it and their effect on the food situation.

OBESITY

ANAEMIA

WATER SCARCITY

Introduction

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and its partners developed the Arab Food Security Monitoring Framework that helps countries assess their food security situation despite its complex and multidimensional nature.[1] The Monitoring Framework is an outcome of the project entitled "Promoting Food and Water Security through Cooperation and Capacity Development in the Arab Region", implemented in collaboration and partnership with Arab countries, the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), academia and other experts, and with the support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

The framework builds on the globally agreed upon definition of food security as existing "when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life",[2] which, as defined, comprises four dimensions, namely availability, access, utilization, and stability, can be evaluated at individual, household, national, regional, or global levels and can be seasonal, transitory or chronic. The framework was developed over a period of three years and involved consultations with more than 200 Arab and international experts. It involved a wide-ranging literature review to account for the latest thinking and experiences in assessing and monitoring food security at national, regional and global levels as well as a mapping of past and present policies, strategies and action plans.

The encompassing review led to the development of a comprehensive monitoring framework that tracks food security at different spatial levels, considers its four dimensions and accounts for both individual and household food security while facilitating a follow-up of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The end result was the Monitoring Framework that expresses food security and nutrition as a function of a multitude of indicators spread in its four dimensions, though approximately five to six indicators under each dimension account for most of the variations and thus are more consequential than the rest. Most of the selected indicators are already widely used globally to monitor aspects of the food system, and the SDGs and other plans of actions are used by major global institutions as development, economic, social, health, or environmental indicators. It was also ensured that the indicators are measurable, relevant to the Arab context and available for at least 50 per cent of Arab countries or the regional population, or both.

1 Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), 2019. Tracking Food Security in the Arab Region (E/ESCWA/SDPD/2019/4). Beirut. Available at https://www.unescwa.org/publications/tracking-food-security-arab-region.

2 Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), 2009. Report of the Committee on World Food Security: Final version. Agenda item III, Thirty-fifth Session of the Committee on World Food Security, 14, 15 and 17 October 2009, CFS:2009/2 Rev.2. Rome.

The 24 indicators that were selected are split into a core pillar with three ex post or outcome indicators — prevalence of undernourishment, moderate or severe food insecurity and obesity, while the remaining 21 ex ante or causal indicators were further split into the four food security dimensions as shown below. All the indicators are global in nature while catering to regional specificities and are grouped as follows:

- **The Core Pillar** comprises three outcome indicators that provide a picture of the prevailing food security and nutrition situation resulting from policies and programmes being implemented as reflected in the form of malnutrition – undernutrition (low caloric intake), overnutrition (excess caloric intake) or nutrient deficiency (low nutrient intake);

1 Core Indicators (CO)

Code	Indicator description	Short name	SDG linkage
CO1	Prevalence of undernourishment Ⓡ %	Undernourishment	2.1.1
CO2	Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity measured using FIES Ⓡ %	Food insecurity	2.1.2
CO3	Prevalence of obesity in the adult population (18 years and older) Ⓡ %	Obesity	

Ⓡ : Reversed During Normalization

- **The Availability** dimension comprises six indicators reflecting the supply side of food, namely, physical food inflow and outflow at macro and micro levels through production, trade, distribution, and others;

2 Food Availability Indicators (AV)

Code	Indicator description	Short name	SDG linkage
AV1	Primary wheat yield as a percentage of potential achievable yield - %	Yields	2.3.1
AV2	Agriculture Orientation index for government expenditures - Index	Agriculture expenditure	2.a.1
AV3	Food losses (% total food available) Ⓡ %	Food loss	12.3
AV4	Average dietary energy supply adequacy - %	Dietary energy supply	
AV5	Wheat import dependency ratio Ⓡ %	Import dependency	
AV6	Share of water resources used in agriculture out of total renewable water resources Ⓡ %	Agriculture water	6.4.2

- **The Access** dimension comprises five indicators reflecting the ability of the population to acquire needed food through financial means and/or socioeconomic strengths with determinants including income/revenues, prices and supply-chain infrastructure;

3 Food Access Indicators (AC)

Code	Indicator description	Short name	SDG linkage
AC1	Poverty headcount ratio (R) %	Poverty	1.1.1/1.2.1/1.2.2
AC2	Share of food consumption expenditure in total household consumption expenditure (R) %	Food consumption	
AC3	Unemployment rate (R) %	Unemployment	8.5.2
AC4	Logistics performance - index	Logistics	
AC5	Inflation, consumer prices (R) %	Inflation	

- **The Utilization** dimension comprises five indicators touching on nutrition impact or factors affecting it such as availability of basic water and sanitation infrastructure and critical health parameters showing the impact of food unavailability or nutrient deficiency, namely, stunting, wasting and anaemia;

4 Food Utilization Indicators (UT)

Code	Indicator description	Short name	SDG linkage
UT1	The population using at least basic drinking water services - %	Drinking water access	1.4.1/6.1.1
UT2	The population using at least basic sanitation services - %	Sanitation access	1.4.1/6.2.1
UT3	Children under 5 years of age affected by stunting (R) %	Child stunting	2.2.1
UT4	Children under 5 years of age affected by wasting (R) %	Child wasting	2.2.2
UT5	Anaemia among women of reproductive age (15-49 years) (R) %	Women anaemia	

- **The Stability** dimension comprises five indicators highlighting the variability in food production or supply factors that might affect these such as climate change, weather events, price shocks and sociopolitical conditions, all of which might impact the other food security dimensions and the core pillar as well;

5 Stability Indicators (ST)

Code	Indicator description	Short name	SDG linkage
ST1	Climate change vulnerability index (R)	Climate change	
ST2	Food price anomalies standard deviation (R)	Price anomalies	2.c.1
ST3	Political stability and absence of violence - ranking	Political stability	
ST4	Per capita food production variability - $1,000/capita (R)	Production variability	
ST5	Per capita food supply variability - kcal/capita/day (R)	Supply variability	

Data are collected and computed using a dedicated Excel template. The results are presented in the form of a dashboard with two overlapping doughnut charts whose ten rings represent the data normalized to score between 0 (worst performance) and 10 (best performance), as depicted in the graph below. The inner doughnut displays the results of the core indicators while the outer doughnut shows those of the four food security dimension indicators. During the normalization process, indicators with a low value indicating good performance were reversed and are represented with an (R). The doughnut chart is always accompanied by a table presenting the raw indicator data together with the year of data collection and the overall trend between two time periods.

By design, the framework is mechanistic for two reasons: (i) indicators are set and distributed across the food security core pillar and four dimensions; and (ii) the interpretation of results follows a determined path consisting, first, in evaluating results of the three core indicators to identify food security and/or nutritional outcome, and second, in examining the 21 dimension indicators to identify hotspot areas that need immediate action. Stakeholders only need to enter data into the provided Excel template to generate the doughnut graph and related table containing raw data and trends. The data can be sourced at the regional, national and, if available, sub-national levels and disaggregated along gender lines or others noting, however, that a great majority of indicators cannot be disaggregated below the national level.

A complete description of the framework, which was endorsed by the Executive Council of AOAD in March 2019, was published and is available at ESCWA official publication website[3] under the title "Tracking Food Security in the Arab Region".[4] In addition to providing a full background on the framework, the publication presents the key results of tracking food security at the Arab regional level and the trend over the considered years and reviews selected policies and actions that might be considered under each of the indicators to remedy arising concerns. The publication is accompanied by a technical document entitled "Manual for Monitoring Food Security in the Arab Region", which provides a more detailed description for each of the 24 indicators comprising the monitoring framework including, when applicable, computation methodology, justification for selection, linkage to SDGs, potential data sources, and normalization process. It also overviews the use of the accompanying Excel template. Since the completion of the Food Security Monitoring Framework, numerous national agricultural and statistics experts from Arab countries have received in-depth training that took place in Tunis[5] and Beirut[6] and which focused on how to utilize the framework and interpret results for maximum impact for policy and programme design and development.

This report provides a series of food security overviews for the 22 Arab countries, which build on the above-described Arab Food Security Monitoring Framework. Its aim is to further highlight how to use the framework as well as to build capacity on its use with a focus on the national level. As such, it supports Arab countries in their endeavours to utilize the framework in the implementation of food security programmes, to assess the prevailing situation and

3 See https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/tracking-food-security-arab-region-english_1.pdf.

4 See https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/manual-monitoring-food-security-arab-region-english_1.pdf.

5 See https://www.unescwa.org/events/training1-food-security-monitoring-framework-arab.

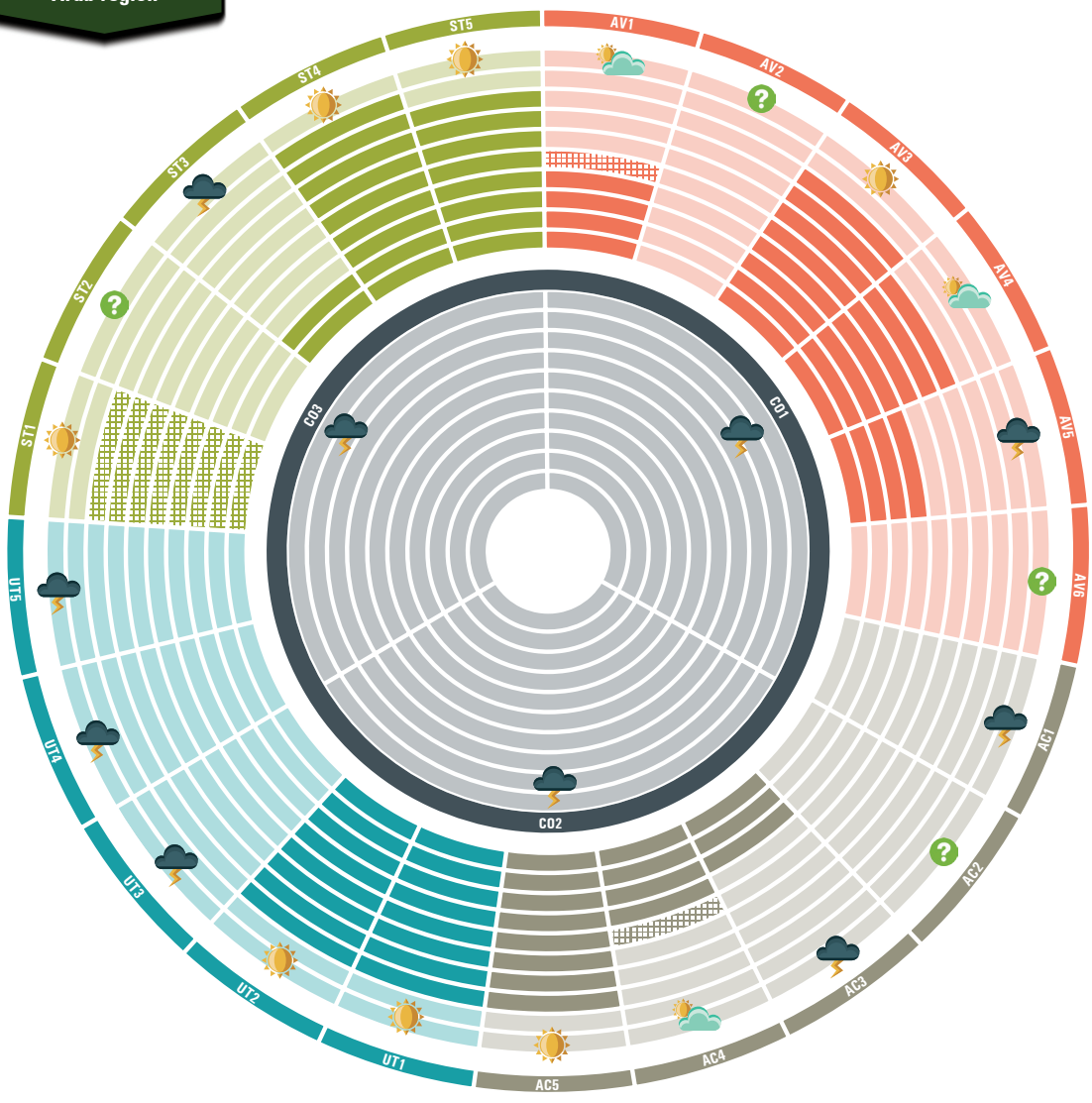
6 See https://www.unescwa.org/events/training2-food-security-monitoring-framework-arab.

to follow up on progress achieved towards the implementation of selected SDGs. It should further enhance capacity at country level and support efforts of national experts to collect focused data, analyse them using a dedicated framework and interpret meaningfully the results to provide policymakers with an overall view of their respective country's food security situation while also outlining alternative paths to address the situation.

The country overviews were produced by ESCWA with data delivered by national experts who provided or reviewed the underlying data (see attached list) and from global databases, as appropriate. For some countries, critical data are still missing, which should serve as a call to action to collect and provide the necessary data as the basis of more accurate and focused advice. The data were collected prior to the COVID-19 pandemic; thus, some results might not reflect the current situation. It is hoped that the report will raise the necessary awareness so that countries can make additional efforts to remediate the lack of data.

Food security dashboard

Arab region



2010 Data: Latest Data:

Performance: High: Proceed Action | Average: More Action | Low: Urgent Action | No Data

Food security indicators, world vs. Arab region

Indicators		World		Arab region			
		Latest		2010	Latest		Trend
Code	Description	Value	Year	Value	Value	Year	
CORE INDICATORS							
CO1	Undernourishment (R) %	10.8	2016	11.5	12.1	2016	Yellow
CO2	Food insecurity (R) %	9.2	2018	n.a.	12.2	2016	
CO3	Obesity (R) %	13.0	2016	24.6	28.4	2016	Red
AVAILABILITY INDICATORS							
AV1	Wheat yields - %	n.a.		76.5	82.2	2017	Green
AV2	Agriculture expenditure - index	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
AV3	Food loss (R) %	n.a.		7.3	6.8	2013	Green
AV4	Dietary energy supply - %	n.a.		131	131	2017	Yellow
AV5	Wheat Import dependency (R) %	n.a.		62.5	65.0	2012	Yellow
AV6	Agriculture water (R) %	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
ACCESS INDICATORS							
AC1	Poverty (R) %	26.2	2015	n.a.	16.6	mult.	
AC2	Food consumption (R) %	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
AC3	Unemployment (R) %	5.0	2018	9.6	10.4	mult.	Red
AC4	Logistics - index	2.8	2016	2.6	2.7	2016	Green
AC5	Inflation (R) %	2.5	2018	5.7	12.8	mult.	Red
UTILIZATION INDICATORS							
UT1	Drinking water access - %	88.5	2015	84.3	86.9	2015	Yellow
UT2	Sanitation access - %	68.0	2015	78.9	80.8	2015	Yellow
UT3	Child stunting (R) %	22.2	2017	n.a.	22.9	mult.	
UT4	Child wasting (R) %	7.5	2017	n.a.	8.7	mult.	
UT5	Women anaemia (R) %	32.8	2016	34.2	35.5	2016	Yellow
STABILITY INDICATORS							
ST1	Climate change (R) - index	n.a.		n.a.	0.1	2019	
ST2	Price Anomalies (R) - index	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
ST3	Political stability - ranking	n.a.		20	14	2017	Red
ST4	Production variability (R) - $1,000/capita	n.a.		10.3	10.1	2016	Yellow
ST5	Supply variability (R) - kcal/cap/day	n.a.		32.8	29.8	2013	Green

(R): Reversed During Normalization n.a.= Not Available mult.= Multiple years
Red: Negative Trend Yellow: Neutral Trend Green: Positive Trend

Source: Computed by ESCWA.

Country background

A. Natural resources

Located in the Arabian Gulf, the Kingdom of Bahrain is the smallest Arab country, at 770.8 km^2. Bahrain has a large desert and dry land that experience frequent droughts and sandstorms. The land suitable for agriculture is located in the north and north-west though it represents less than 3 per cent of the total land.[1]

Box 1. A water-stressed country

With a per capita water availability of less than 100 m^3/year, Bahrain is a water-stressed country. Per capita water consumption is around 300 liters per day with domestic water demand accounting for slightly less than 50 per cent of total demand while agriculture requires about 45 per cent and the remaining going towards the industrial and commercial sectors.

Rainfall is limited and inconsistent while evapotranspiration rates are high. Bahrain has an unsustainable rate of groundwater abstraction, as about 54 per cent of the water consumed is extracted from the Dammam and the Rus Umm Eradhuma aquifers. About 70 per cent of the extracted water is directed towards agriculture production. Overabstraction is leading to the rapid deterioration of groundwater quality through salinization and pollution and to the drying of freshwater springs.

To remedy the situation, Bahrain is increasingly tapping on non-conventional water sources. About 36 per cent of its water need is met through desalination and about 10 per cent from treated wastewater, part of which is used for agricultural production, notably in the high water-use efficiency, hydroponic vegetable production. However, the growing water resource scarcity and low water conveyance efficiency are significantly limiting the expansion of domestic food production, making Bahrain heavily dependent on food imports and thereby increasing its susceptibility to volatilities prevailing in global food markets.

Source: Lehane, S., 2015.

1 Crystal, J.A. and C.G. Smith, 2020.

B. Socioeconomy

Bahrain has a population of about 1.7 million people making it also one of the most densely populated countries.[2] It experienced a rapid population growth following the discovery of oil, which resulted in an increased influx of foreign workers. The population lives mostly in cities omit for the north-west, where they live mostly in small villages relying on irrigation to produce horticulture and dairy products.

With a per capita gross domestic product (GDP) above $20,000 in 2017, Bahrain is among the highly affluent countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). It has put in place a programme to diversify its economy by investing heavily in the petrochemical and aluminium industries, among others.[3]

C. Agriculture and food security

Bahrain has a strong agriculture tradition as it was known as the country of a million date palms. Domestic agriculture is oriented towards the production of high-value fresh vegetables. Bahrain used to have a vibrant fishing industry, but it has contracted due to the heavy pollution of the Arabian Gulf. The surviving parts of the fish industry rely on artisanal fishing methods as modern trawlers are prohibited. Aquaculture is now developing fast.[4]

Bahrain imports most of its food with the implication that food supply shocks such as those of the last decade as well as market and price volatility are usually a cause of concern. To remedy the situation, Bahrain has been increasingly investing in the food industry including research and development, notably for innovative technologies such as space management, irrigation techniques and the establishment of a network of food storage systems.[5]

Bahrain imports up to 90 per cent of its cereal needs, which include rice and wheat.[6] There is some domestic production of poultry and small ruminants, dates, eggs, milk, and some vegetables such as okra and tomato.[7] Significant State subsidies are aimed towards the agriculture sector and irrigation systems.

2 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA), Population Division, 2019; and Lehane, S., 2015.

3 Lehane, 2015.

4 Crystal and Smith, 2020; Lehane, 2015; and Bahrain Economic Development Board (EDB), 2014.

5 Bahrain EDB, 2014.

6 Lehane, 2015.

7 Galal, O., M. Corroon and C. Tirado, 2010.

Data and trends

A. Core indicators

- **Prevalence of undernourishment (CO1)** is considered non-existent as it is well below the 2.5 per cent threshold at which it starts being recorded. This is usually the case for high-income countries;
- **Prevalence of severe food insecurity (CO2)** was estimated at 6.6 per cent in 2016, which is about half the average of the Arab region of 12.2 per cent.[8] The national data provided were not accurately reported;
- **Prevalence of adult obesity (CO3)** increased from 26.6 per cent in 2010 to 60 per cent in 2016 according to national estimates while the World Health Organization (WHO) puts it at 29.8 per cent. These levels are higher than the Arab regional average of 28.4 per cent. The increasing obesity is attributed to a change in diet towards a more Western style diet that contains more meat and dairy products and fast foods and sugary soft drinks.[9]

B. Availability

- **Wheat yield to potential (AV1)** data are not available as Bahrain is not a producer of wheat;
- **Agriculture orientation index (AV2)** data are not available;
- **Food losses to food available (AV3)** data are not available;
- **Average dietary energy supply adequacy (AV4)**, according to national estimates was at 100 per cent in both 2010 and 2017. Being a high-income country, the level is adequate to ensure food availability and utilization for the entire population;
- **Wheat import dependency (AV5)** decreased slightly from 94 per cent in 2010 to 90 per cent in 2018, which is substantially higher than the Arab region average of 65 per cent. The high dependence on food imports might affect food availability and accessibility in times of food markets volatility; however, the country is well-endowed financially to weather out such periods of uncertainty;

8 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2019.

9 Galal, Corroon and Tirado, 2010.

- **Water resources used in agriculture (AV6)** was at 68.3 per cent in 2010 and 69.3 per cent in 2017, a negative trend that highlights the unsustainability of the use of water resources for agricultural production in Bahrain.

C. Access

- **Poverty ratio at $3.2/day (AC1)** national estimates were at 0 per cent for both 2010 and 2018 while the Arab regional average was at 16.6 per cent in 2015;
- **Food consumption share of expenditures (AC2)** shows a positive progress between 2010 and 2018 as it declined from 25 per cent to 21 per cent, respectively. However, for a high-income country, this share is high given that the average in the European Union is only 12 per cent, which is an indication of either low levels of income or high food prices;
- **Unemployment rate (AC3)** was at 3.6 per cent in 2010 and 3.7 per cent in 2016 compared to 10.4 per cent for the Arab region. Bahrain is at full employment;
- **Logistics performance (AC4)** was 3.4 in 2010 but decreased slightly to 3.3 in 2016. Generally speaking, the transport and port infrastructures in Bahrain are of good standard, which decreases challenges in the food supply chain;
- **Inflation, consumer prices (AC5)** was at 2.1 per cent in 2018, a slight increase compared to 2010 with 1.96 per cent. A healthy inflation rate is usually comprised between 2-3 per cent.

D. Utilization

- **Population using basic drinking water services (UT1)** reached 100 per cent of the population in 2010;
- **Population using basic sanitation services (UT2)** was also at 100 per cent by 2010;
- **Stunting in children under five years (UT3)** had no official data in 2018 while it was only 5.8 per cent in 2010, well below the Arab regional average of 22.9 per cent. Children stunting in Bahrain is well within the "low severity of malnutrition" classification of WHO;
- **Wasting in children under five years (UT4)** was similarly low as officially reported at 3.3 per cent in 2018 and no data in 2010. The Arab regional average is at 8.7 per cent;
- **Prevalence of anaemia among women (UT5),** however, is among the highest in the Arab region, at 41.5 per cent in 2010 and 42 per cent in 2016. These rates are well above the Arab region's average of 35.5 per cent in 2016. This situation is alarming as the values are also well above the targets set by WHO for 2030 of 15.2 per cent.[10]

10 FAO and others, 2019.

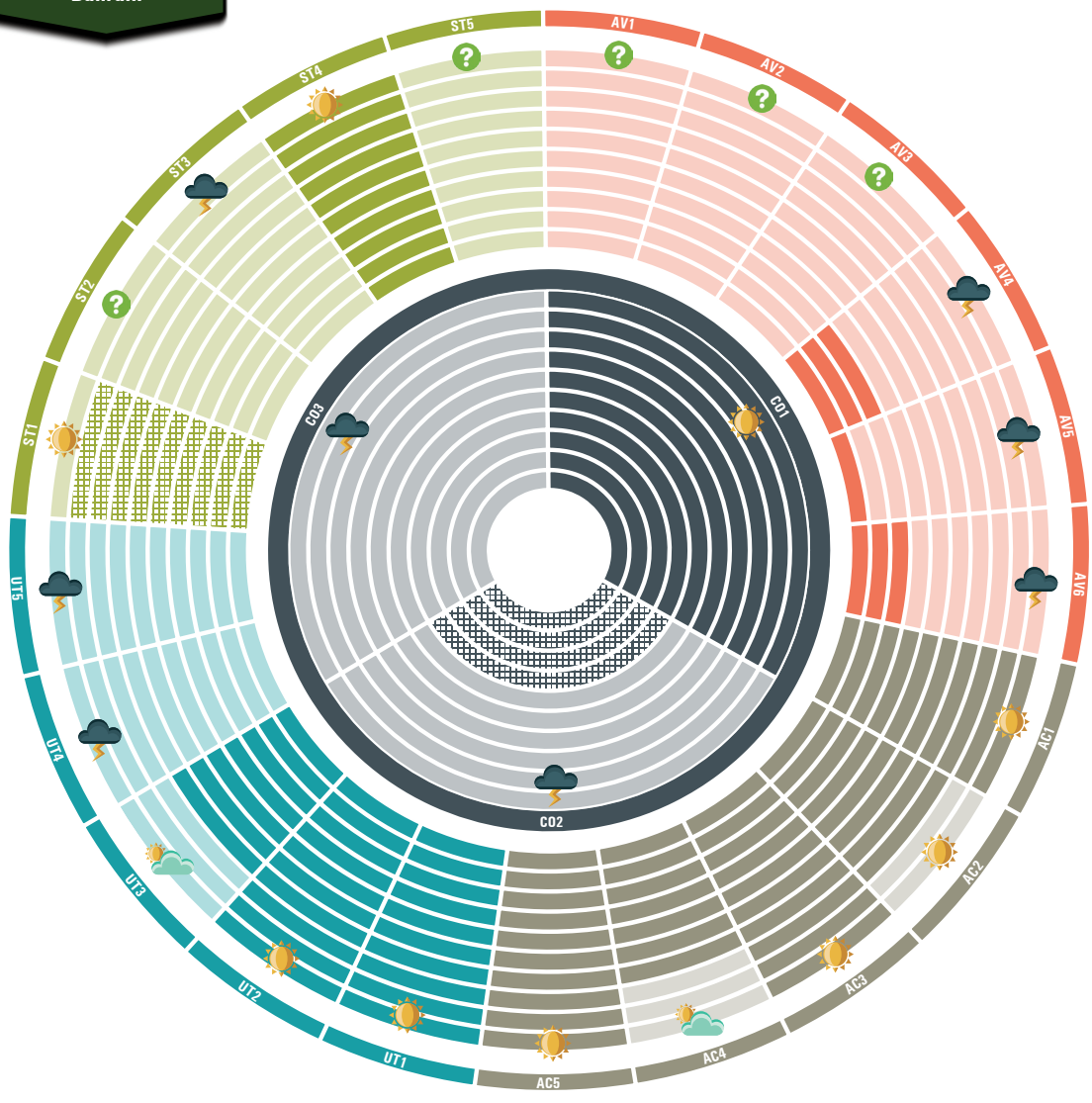
E. Stability

- **Climate change vulnerability (ST1)** was 0.05 in 2018 meaning that Bahrain is not being much affected by weather disasters, loss of agricultural productivity or sea-level rise, the components of the index;
- **Food price anomalies (ST2)** data are not available;
- **Political stability (ST3)** indicator decreased between 2010 and 2018 from a ranking of about 29 to 17, respectively, which depicts a decrease in sociopolitical stability following the unrests that swept throughout the region in the early 2010s. National data were not used for this indicator as there might have been a misperception on its computation;
- **Food production variability (ST4)** shows no significant change at just below $2,000[11] per capita in both 2010 and 2016;
- **Food supply variability (ST5)** data are not available as the national data provided might have been misconstrued.

11 Constant 2004-2006 international USD.

Food security dashboard

Bahrain



2010 Data: Latest Data:

Performance: High: Proceed Action | Average: More Action | Low: Urgent Action | No Data

Food Security Indicators, Bahrain

Indicators		Arab		Bahrain			
		Latest		2010	Latest		Trend
Code	Description	Value	Year	Value	Value	Year	
CORE INDICATORS							
CO1	Undernourishment (R) %	12.1	2016	0.0	0.0	2018	🟡
CO2	Food insecurity (R) %	12.2	2016	n.a.	6.6	2016	
CO3	Obesity (R) %	28.4	2016	26.6	60.0	2018	🔴
AVAILABILITY INDICATORS							
AV1	Wheat yields - %	82.2	2017	n.a.	n.a.		
AV2	Agriculture expenditure - index	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
AV3	Food loss (R) %	6.8	2013	n.a.	n.a.		
AV4	Dietary energy supply %	131	2017	100	100	2017	🟡
AV5	Wheat Import dependency (R) %	65.0	2012	94.0	90.0	2018	🟡
AV6	Agriculture water (R) %	n.a.		68.3	69.3	2017	🟡
ACCESS INDICATORS							
AC1	Poverty (R) %	16.6	mult.	0.0	0.0	2018	🟡
AC2	Food consumption (R) %	n.a.		25.0	21.0	2018	🟢
AC3	Unemployment (R) %	10.4	mult.	3.6	3.7	2016	🟡
AC4	Logistics - index	2.7	2016	3.4	3.3	2016	🟡
AC5	Inflation (R) %	12.8	mult.	2.0	2.1	2018	🔴
UTILIZATION INDICATORS							
UT1	Drinking water access - %	86.9	2015	100.0	100.0	2017	🟡
UT2	Sanitation access - %	80.8	2015	100.0	100.0	2017	🟡
UT3	Child stunting (R) %	22.9	mult.	5.8	n.a.		
UT4	Child wasting (R) %	8.7	mult.	n.a.	3.3	2018	
UT5	Women anaemia (R) %	35.5	2016	41.5	42.0	2016	🟡
STABILITY INDICATORS							
ST1	Climate change (R) - index	0.1	2019	n.a.	0.05	2018	
ST2	Price Anomalies (R) - index	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
ST3	Political stability - ranking	14	2017	29	17	2018	🔴
ST4	Production variability (R) - $1,000/capita	10.1	2016	1.9	1.7	2018	🟢
ST5	Supply variability (R) - kcal/cap/day	29.8	2013	n.a.	n.a.		

(R): Reversed During Normalization n.a.= Not Available mult.= Multiple years

🔴 Red: Negative Trend 🟡 Yellow: Neutral Trend 🟢 Green: Positive Trend

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, all data figuring in this table and framework have been sourced from international databases or national sources.

Food security snapshot

A. Drivers and determinants

Regarding the food security core pillar, Bahrain is a high-income country and, as such, is not much challenged by the issues of undernourishment and food insecurity experience even though it slightly underperforms regarding the latter. As an affluent economy, however, it is increasingly facing high obesity (CO3) rates, especially among women, which needs to be addressed through appropriate dietary interventions and nutrition policies given that the prevalence of anaemia among women is also high.

Hotspots include the following:

- **Availability dimension:** dietary energy supply (AV4), import dependency (AV5) and water use in agriculture (AV6);
- **Utilization dimension:** wasting among children (UT4) and anaemia among women (UT5);
- **Stability dimension:** political stability (ST3).

B. Action areas

As a country that relies mainly on food imports, food production might not be high on the agenda of policymakers. However, given that local food production uses more than 69 per cent of total water withdrawals, the issue needs to be addressed urgently with a view to conserving water. Enhancing the efficient use of the scarce water and other resources (natural and financial) in agriculture is a necessity.

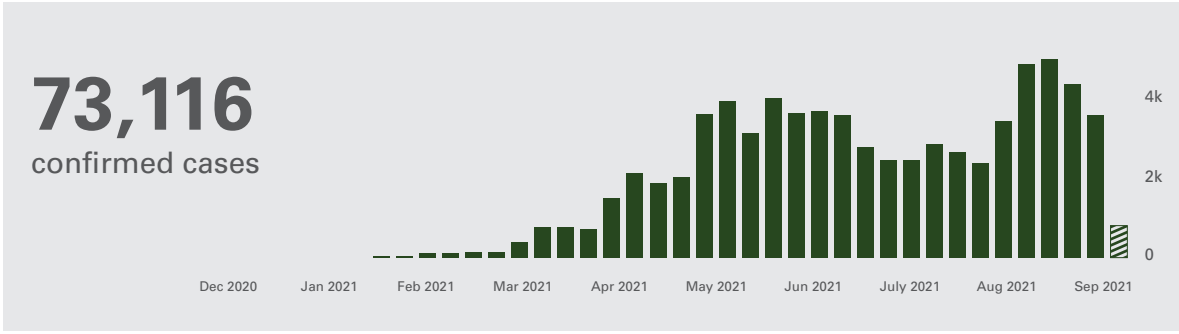
The issue of data availability is very important to monitor food security. There is a need to enhance and promote adequate data collection to facilitate monitoring of both food security and resource use in agriculture to limit waste. Data on food import and food loss are also missing. Given the missing data and the inaccuracies for a number of indicators, the results of this monitoring exercise are more indicative than authoritative in terms of food security and nutrition analysis.

Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic reached Bahrain on February 24, 2020 and, by the end of September, had affected more than 70,000 people with more than 260 deaths.

Daily cases peaked at about 600 between the end of June and early July and slightly in August before peaking again in September.[12]

Weekly cases



Source: World Health Organization (WHO), n.d.

Measures to stem the spread of the disease[13] have targeted commercial businesses that provide non-essential services while those providing essential services such as supermarkets, banks, bakeries, or health-care services, remained open.

In April, the Food Wealth Committee assured the availability of all food products including meat and poultry. As a result of business closures, people struggled financially to buy food and butter, among others.[14]

Unemployment rate among Bahrainis is at 4.7 per cent and is expected to decrease in 2021 to reach 3.8 per cent.[15]

12 WHO, n.d.
13 Suspended dine in services, restricted religious services, prohibited more than five individuals gathering. Wristbands that track locations were distributed to people, it would monitor and send warnings when two people are 15 – meters apart. Passenger traffic at the airport were 98% less than usual.
14 Starvision News, 2020a.
15 Nordea Trade Portal, n. d.

Box 2. Examples of Government-led initiatives

On April 17, the GCC approved the establishment of a common food supply network among its six member states to improve the supply of food to and between these countries.[a]

In May, the Government signed an agreement with a private-sector entity to enhance and improve food security in Bahrain. The programme provides land and fish fingerlings to boost vegetable production by at least 20 per cent as well as fish self-sufficiency by 50–60 per cent.[b]

The Food Wealth Committee instructed food dealers, food retailers, supermarkets and hypermarkets not to raise prices of food commodities during the Holy month of Ramadan.[c]

Examples of other initiatives

Between February and May 2020, the Indian community in Bahrain received and distributed about 1,500 food kits sufficient for nearly two weeks to more than 5,000 of its members in need. Food kits contained staple food (rice and wheat), legumes (lentils), cooking oil, long-life milk, eggs, tea, sugar and food seasoning (coriander and chili powder).[d]

In April 2020, freshly homemade cooked food was distributed to unemployed salon workers, domestic workers, migrant workers and workers living in camps.[e]

More than 430,000 iftar kits were distributed during the month of Ramadan (April-May) to thousands of people who were economically or financially affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, including expatriate workers, and an additional 100,000 meals were distributed after the month of Ramadan.[f]

a Middle East Monitor (2020).
b The Fish Site, 2020.
c Starvision News, 2020b.
d Starvision News, 2020c; and 2020d.
e Starvision News, 2020e; and 2020f.
f Starvision News, 2020g.

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