Arab food security monitoring framework

Country reviews

Comoros

UNITED NATIONS
الاسكوا
ESCWA

Shared Prosperity Dignified Life

UNITED NATIONS
الاسكوا
ESCWA

Shared Prosperity **Dignified Life**

VISION

ESCWA, an innovative catalyst for a stable, just and flourishing Arab region

MISSION

Committed to the 2030 Agenda, ESCWA's passionate team produces innovative knowledge, fosters regional consensus and delivers transformational policy advice. Together, we work for a sustainable future for all.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Arab food security monitoring framework

Country reviews

Comoros

UNITED NATIONS
Beirut

United Nations publication issued by ESCWA, United Nations House, Riad El Solh Square, P.O. Box: 11-8575, Beirut, Lebanon.

Website: www.unescwa.org

Photo Credit:
Cover: ©iStock

Contents

Key Messages

The monitoring framework highlights that rates of undernourishment and the food insecurity experience scale are elevated in the Comoros, as are rates of child stunting and wasting and anaemia among women. Adequate data is needed for proper monitoring. The country profile reviews the impact of COVID-19, early measures against it and their effect on the food situation.


CHILD STUNTING


CHILD WASTING


ANAEMIA

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.

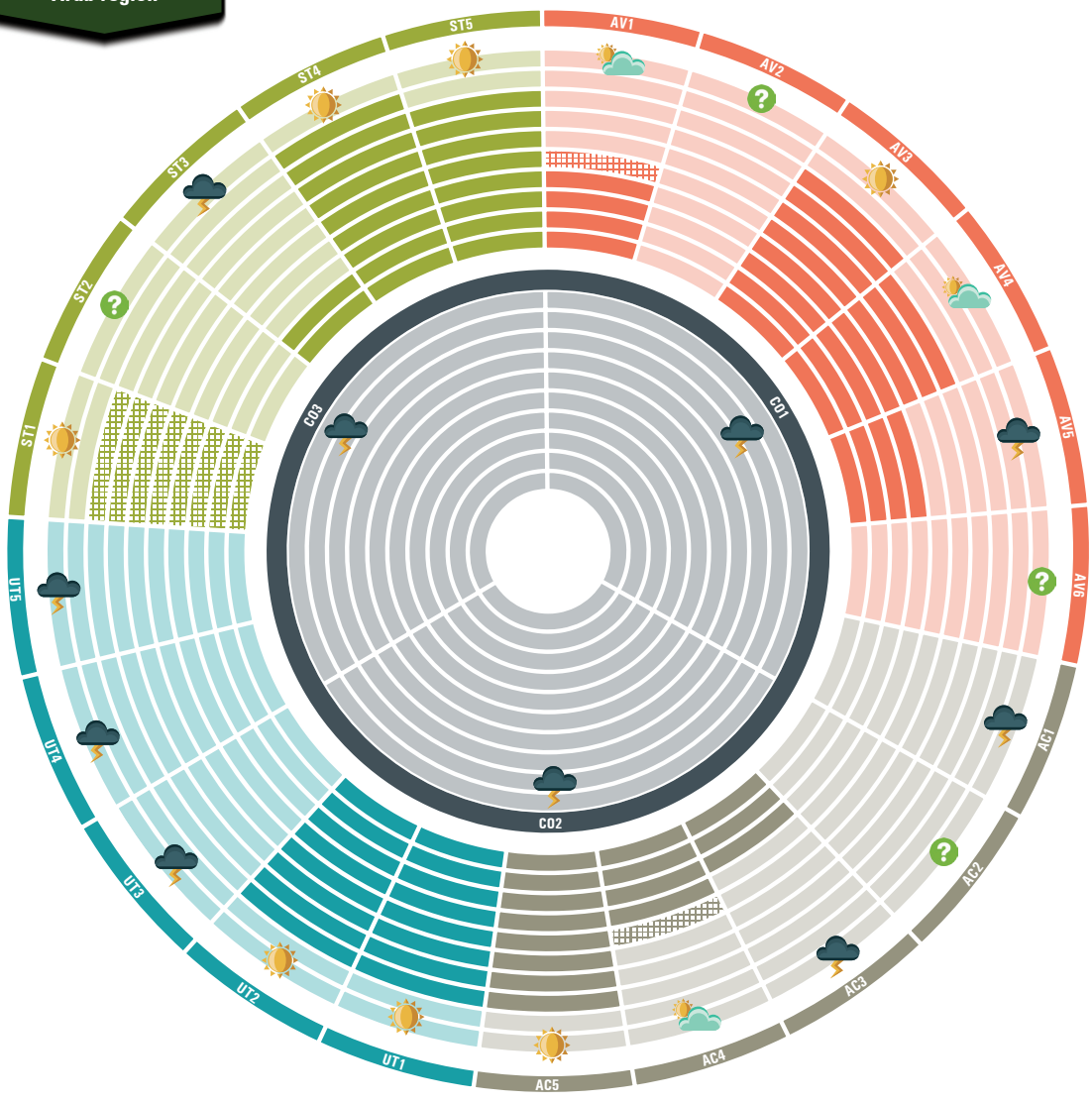
6 See https://www.unescwa.org/events/training2-food-security-monitoring-framework-arab.

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

The archipelago of Comoros is located in the Indian Ocean, between Mozambique and Madagascar, with a total area of 1,660 km^2, most of which is arable. The country lacks major streams and thus relies mostly on rainfall for its water need as it gets up to 2,900 mm/year of rainfall.[1]

Box 1. Fisheries hold potential for improving food security in the Comoros

Due to its location in the Indian Ocean and to its relatively large coastline, it is unsurprising that fishing is an important source of livelihood. It is also a significant contributor to the national economy and to employment as an estimated 30 per cent of the population is dependent on this sector.

The Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis published by the World Food Programme (WFP) in 2006 found that the most vulnerable segment of the population were the farmers and the fisherfolk as they are exposed to periodic shocks. Fifteen per cent of the fishing and agricultural households consumed just one meal per day, and 67 per cent consumed two or fewer meals. Additionally, 47 per cent of infant death was due to illnesses related to malnutrition. The study also indicated that food insecurity was largely due to failure in access to food, as the majority of the population lived under the poverty line.

Fisheries can play an important role in nutrition as a source of high-quality protein, and fish consumption is several folds the world average. Yet, the sector needs strengthening and control as fish catches are starting to decline.

Source: World Food Programme (WFP), 2006.

B. Socioeconomy

The country's economy, unlike most other Arab countries, is largely based on agriculture and fishing (close to 50 per cent), which generate most of the foreign exchanges.[2] The population is small (about 850,000), and the gross domestic product

1 Ottenheimer, M. and H. J. Ottenheimer, 2019.

2 Breuil, C. and D. Grima, 2014.

(GDP) is $1.2 billion or $1,362 per capita and a public debt of 31.2 per cent of GDP in 2018.[3]

The country relies heavily on remittances from an estimated one quarter of the population that works outside the country. Microbusinesses contribute significantly to women's incomes, who account for 20 per cent of the employment in petty trade and similar endeavours.

C. Agriculture and food security

Comoros relies heavily on food imports to meet its food needs with food import representing 31 per cent of total imports in 2018.[4] Agriculture production consists essentially of fisheries, the production of bourbon vanilla, ylang ylang, cloves coffee and cacao, most of which are destined for export. Staple produces include cassava, sweet potatoes, bananas and rainfed rice though they are insufficient to feed the growing population.

3 Trading Economics, n. d.
4 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Africa, 2020.

Data and trends

A. Core indicators

- **Prevalence of undernourishment (CO1)** data are not available;
- **Prevalence of severe food insecurity (CO2)** data are not available. WFP study of 2016 (box 1) indicated that food insecurity affected a large part of the population, but these data need updating;
- **Prevalence of adult obesity (CO3)** is low but exhibited a slight increase from 6 per cent in 2010 to 7.8 per cent in 2016 while staying well below the Arab regional average (28 per cent).

B. Availability

- **Wheat yield to potential (AV1)** data are not available;
- **Agriculture orientation index (AV2)** data are not available;
- **Food losses to food available (AV3)** data are not available;
- **Average dietary energy supply adequacy (AV4)** is low (105 per cent in 2017), which implies that a portion of the population might not have access to sufficient food to fulfil its dietary needs. This value is far below the Arab region average of 131 per cent in 2017;
- **Wheat import dependency (AV5) data are** not available, FAO notes that Comoros is a food deficit country and that up to 40 per cent of the food is imported;[5]
- **Water resources used in agriculture (AV6)** data are not available, but Comoros has 1,474 m^3/capita/year of total renewable water resources, a supply that is well above water scarcity levels.

5 Breuil and Grima, 2014.

C. Access

- **Poverty at 3.2$ per day (AC1)** was recorded at 37.5 per cent of the population in 2013. Although no earlier or more recent data are available to compare against, this standing is alarming as more than one third of the country's entire population lives in poverty;
- **Food consumption share of expenditures (AC2)** data are not available;
- **Unemployment rate (AC3)** decreased between 2010 and 2018 from 4.2 per cent to 3.7 per cent, respectively. Women unemployment rates were estimated at 4.06 per cent in 2018 while youth unemployment was at 8.47 per cent for the same year. The majority of the labour force in Comoros (56.9 per cent) works in agriculture;[6]
- **Logistical performance (AC4)** is about average with 2.5 in 2010 and 2.6 in 2018. This could be a major deterrent to physical access to food though the Comoros are made up of small islands on which movement is easy;
- **Inflation, consumer prices (AC5)** was at 3.35 per cent in 2010 while the country experienced a deflation (-4.3 per cent) in 2013, suggesting the possibility of a lack of adequate economic growth.

D. Utilization

- **Population using basic drinking water services (UT1)** reached 83.4 per cent of the population in 2010 but decreased to 80.2 per cent in 2017, a negative trend which pushed Comoros further away from achieving the related goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- **Population using basic sanitation services (UT2)** is very low (35.9 per cent in 2017). This is an alarming situation that affects food security in general and human health in particular and is one of the lowest values recorded in the region;
- **Stunting in children under five years (UT3)** affected 32.1 per cent in 2012. Earlier data is not available to compare against but the low values point to an alarming situation as it is far from the World Health Assembly's (WHA) target for 2030 of 12.2 per cent;
- **Wasting in children under five years (UT4)** affected 11.1 per cent in 2012. Earlier data are not available, but the situation is concerning as it falls within the range of a high severity of malnutrition according to the classification of the World Health Organization (WHO). The country is far from achieving the World Health Assembly's (WHA) target for 2030 of 3 per cent;
- **Prevalence of anaemia among women (UT5)** affected 28 per cent in 2010 compared to 29.3 per cent in 2016, which is below the regional average (35.5 per cent in 2016). This high value points to alarming nutritional insecurity.

6 World Bank, n. d.

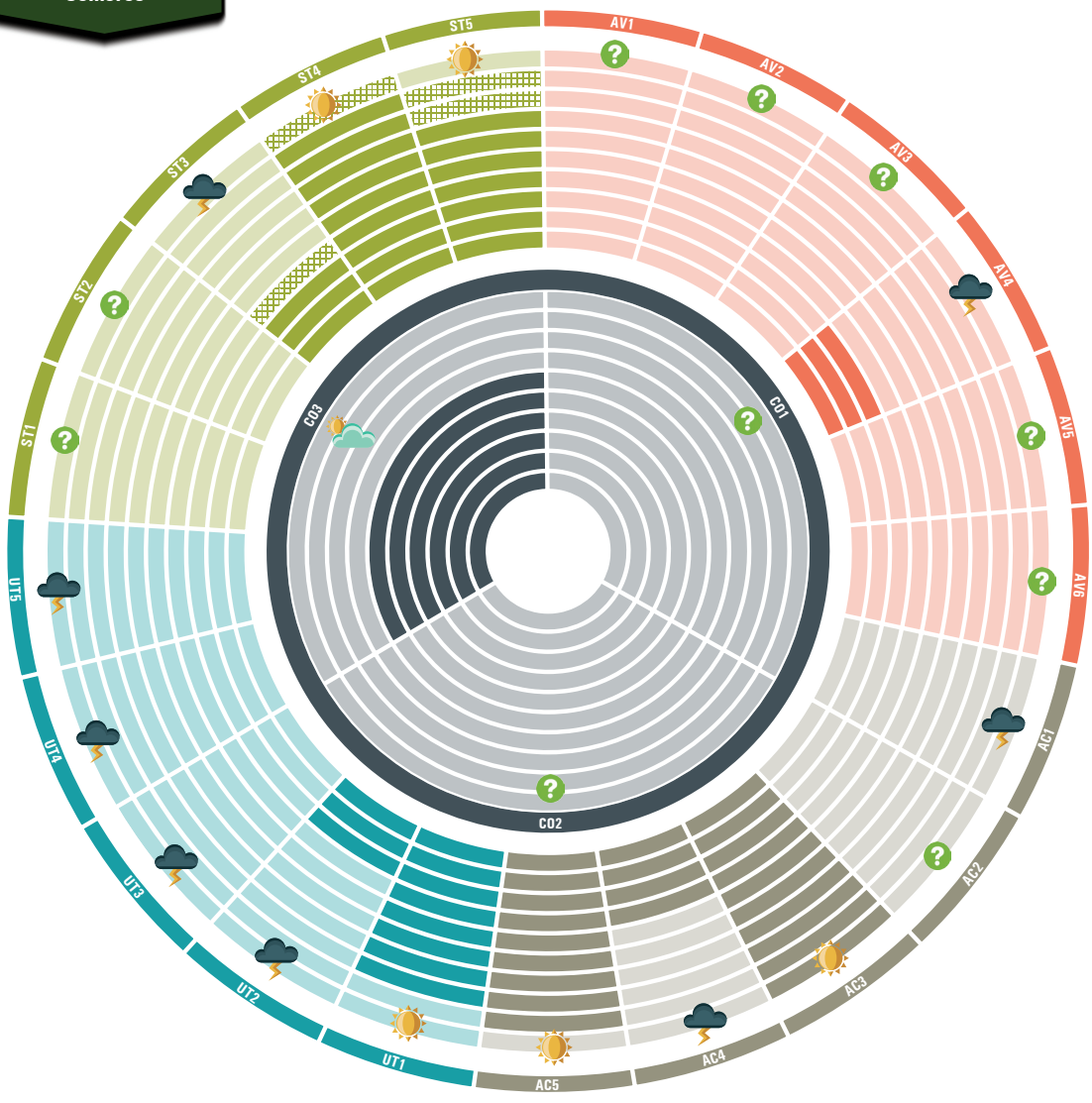
E. **Stability**

- **Climate change vulnerability (ST1)** data are not available;
- **Food price anomalies (ST2)** data are not available;
- **Political stability (ST3)** rose from a ranking of about 27 in 2010 to 39 in 2018, depicting an improving sociopolitical situation in the country;
- **Food production variability (ST4),** already low in 2010 ($4,500), decreased further to reach $1,600[7] per capita indicating a stable production of food across time;
- **Food supply variability (ST5)** also favourably decreased from 39 to 15 kcal/capita/day between 2010 and 2013. This is a positive indicator of stability of food supply over time.

7 Constant 2004-2006 International USD.

Food security dashboard

Comoros



2010 Data: Latest Data:

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

Food security indicators, Comoros

Indicators		Arab		Comoros			
		Latest		2010	Latest		Trend
Code	Description	Value	Year	Value	Value	Year	
CORE INDICATORS							
CO1	Undernourishment (R) %	12.1	2016	n.a.	n.a.		
CO2	Food insecurity (R) %	12.2	2016	n.a.	n.a.		
CO3	Obesity (R) %	28.4	2016	6.0	7.8	2016	🔴
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	106	105	2017	🟡
AV5	Wheat Import dependency (R) %	65.0	2012	n.a.	n.a.		
AV6	Agriculture water (R) %	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
ACCESS INDICATORS							
AC1	Poverty (R) %	16.6	mult.	n.a.	37.5	2013	
AC2	Food consumption (R) %	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
AC3	Unemployment (R) %	10.4	mult.	4.2	3.7	2018	🟢
AC4	Logistics - index	2.7	2016	2.5	2.6	2018	🟡
AC5	Inflation (R) %	12.8	mult.	3.4	-4.3	2013	🔴
UTILIZATION INDICATORS							
UT1	Drinking water access - %	86.9	2015	83.4	80.2	2017	🟡
UT2	Sanitation access - %	80.8	2015	34.3	35.9	2017	🟡
UT3	Child stunting (R) %	22.9	mult.	n.a.	32.1	2012	
UT4	Child wasting (R) %	8.7	mult.	n.a.	11.1	2012	
UT5	Women anaemia (R) %	35.5	2016	28.0	29.3	2016	🟡
STABILITY INDICATORS							
ST1	Climate change (R) - index	0.1	2019	n.a.	n.a.		
ST2	Price Anomalies (R) - index	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
ST3	Political stability - ranking	14	2017	27	39	2018	🟢
ST4	Production variability (R) - $1,000/capita	10.1	2016	4.5	1.6	2016	🟢
ST5	Supply variability (R) - kcal/cap/day	29.8	2013	39.0	15.0	2013	🟢

(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 (including, but not limited to, FAOSTAT, ILOSTAT, World Bank, AQUASTAT), according to each indicator's accredited data source.

Food security snapshot

A. Drivers and determinants

The core pillar indicators show a poor performance in terms of undernourishment (CO1) and food insecurity experience (CO2) with a slight bright spot in terms of obesity (CO3), which is slightly increasing though.

Hotspot areas include the following:

- **Availability:** Dietary energy supply (AV4);
- **Access:** logistical performance (AC4);
- **Utilization:** sanitation (UT2), stunting among children (UT3), wasting among children (UT4) and anaemia among women (UT5);
- **Stability:** political stability (ST3).

The lack of data for a large number of indicators (10 out of 24), and the reliance on some indicators such as wheat yield gap that may be relevant for the majority of Arab countries, but not for a small island State such as Comoros is a limiting factor to the use of the framework. For instance, due to the absence of the two tier-one Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators related to food security which are also core indicators in the framework (CO1 and CO2), it is difficult to obtain a full picture of the food security situation.

Data for obesity (CO3) indicate that the country has one of the lowest rates of adult obesity in the region. Coupled with pervasive poverty, a high dependence on food imports and a severely deficient trade balance, it is expected that the calorific intake of a large proportion of the population would be below acceptable norms.

The low average dietary supply adequacy compared to most countries in the world (close to 100 per cent, noting that this is an average figure) confirms the above fact, as does the high prevalence of stunting among children under 5 along with a relatively high prevalence of wasting within the same group. This is aggravated by the low levels of access to clean water facilities (UT1) and to sanitation services (UT2), especially in rural areas, where also the low logistics performance index points to a deficiency in physical access to food for more than half of the population employed in agriculture.

B. Action areas

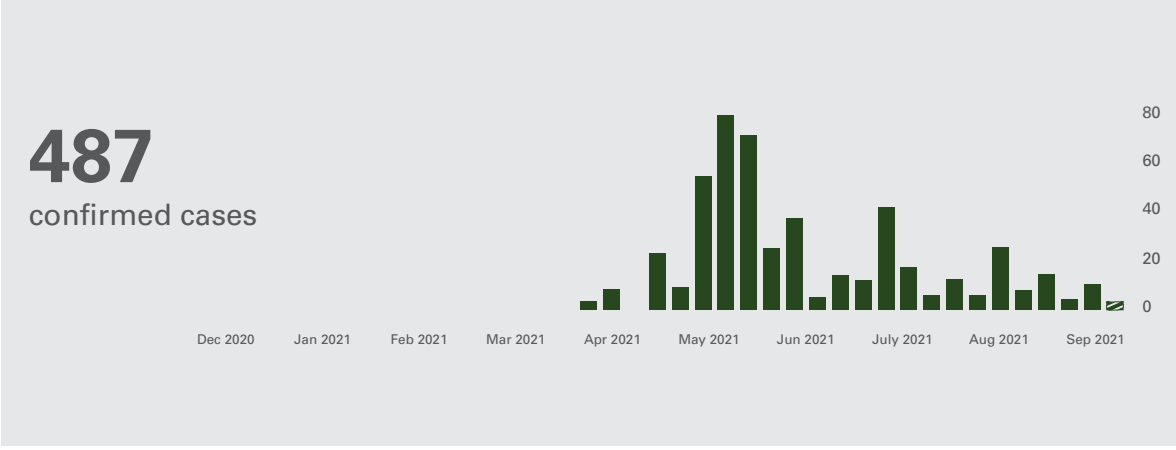
There is no doubt that serious measures must be taken to improve food security in Comoros, starting with improving data collection in order to be able to plan and

strategize adequately. It is imperative to develop the infrastructure and improve physical access to food. Given the economic imbalances in the country, sectoral diversification must be prioritized. Sustainable and socially equitable tourism may offer a viable alternative.

Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic reached Comoros on January 3 and, by early October, had affected about 480 people with about seven deaths recorded. A peak of about 65 cases was reached early June with lower peaks occurring in both mid-July and mid-August.[8]

Weekly cases



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

Comoros' economy is not very diversified, which makes the country highly vulnerable to external shocks. Global trade disruptions that might occur due to the pandemic, especially restrictions that could be imposed by Europe and India, the two largest importers, of 35 per cent and 33 per cent, respectively, of total exports from Comoros, would strain the economy of the country. Disruptions in global trade and reductions in inter-island movement of goods and a general decline in economic activities of the country, negatively impacted the country's ability to export its products on international markets. This, in turn, negatively affected the agricultural sector, which is one of the driving forces of the Comorian economy (46 per cent of GDP, 57 per cent of jobs and almost all export earnings), and reduced the income

8 World Health Organization (WHO), n. d.

of the high number of unskilled labourers in the agricultural sector, which is the mainstay of the economy.

The unemployment rate increased as employees in the tourism, transport and manufacturing sectors lost their jobs. Mostly impacted were those in the informal economy who are estimated to represent 79.2 per cent of all jobs in Comoros, all female jobs, and contributed to 70 per cent of GDP. The decrease in income in these households highly affected their purchasing power.

Measures to stem the spread of the disease included suspension of big gatherings and social events, closure of educational institutions and worship places, and a curfew running from 8:00 at night to 5:00 in the morning.[9] The measures decreased the local demand of food notably as prices of imported tuber vegetables from Tanzania and Madagascar increased by 33 per cent.

The decrease in income, coupled with a decrease in remittances (especially from France whose economy was highly affected by the pandemic), together with increased food prices, are likely to negatively affect the food security of the population.

The low access to safe drinking water and sanitation in the country puts it also at higher risk of disease spreading as hygiene and safety practices become minimal.[10]

Box 2. Examples of Government-led initiatives

Government-led initiatives include the following:

- Easing customs measures and reduced custom duties and taxes, on food and others, by 30 per cent for importers allowing them to clear imports in one day;
- Banning water and electricity companies from cutting off services to households;
- Establishing a price control system to monitor prices of essential goods in the market to prevent price increase or inflation.

Source: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Africa, 2020.

9 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Africa, 2020.
10 Ibid.

References

Breuil, C. and D. Grima (2014). Baseline Report Comoros. SmartFish Programme of the Indian Ocean Commission, Fisheries Management FAO component, Ebene, Mauritius.

Ottenheimer, M. and H.J. Ottenheimer (2019). Comoros. Encyclopedia Britannica. Available at https://www.britannica.com/place/Comoros (accessed April 2020).

Trading Economics (n. d.). Comoros. Available at https://tradingeconomics.com/search.aspx?q=comoros (accessed April 2020).

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Africa (2020). Note sur les Implications de la Pandémie COVID-19 sur le Développement Economique et Social de l'Union des Comores (May). Available at https://www.africa.undp.org/content/dam/comoros/docs/Library/UNDP-KM-Note_impacts%20socioeconomiques-COVID19.pdf.

World Bank (n. d.). World Development Indicators. Available at https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators (accessed 13 November 2019).

World Food Programme (WFP) (2006). Comoros: Comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis (CFSVA). Available at https://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp085419.pdf.

World Health Organization (WHO) (n. d.). COVID-19 dashboard. Available at https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/km (October 6, 2020).

21-00184