Arab food security monitoring framework

Country reviews

Jordan

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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

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Key Messages

The monitoring framework shows that obesity is a major issue in Jordan and anaemia is prevalent among women. The country is over-reliant on food imports, which could weaken its food security. The country profile reviews the impact of COVID-19, early measures against it and their effect on the food situation.

OBESITY

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.

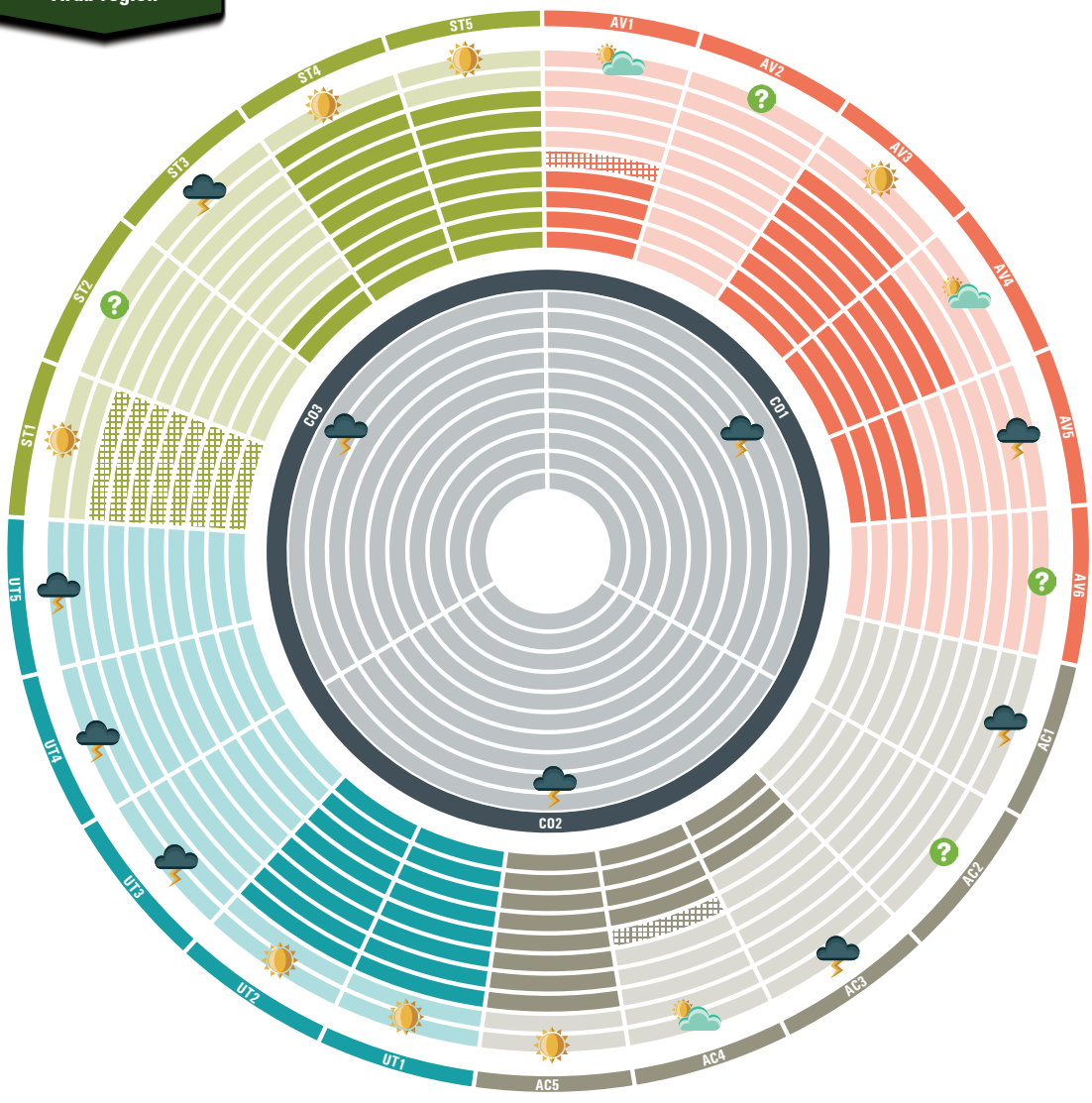
6 See https://www.unescwa.org/events/training2-food-security-monitoring-framework-arab.

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	🟡
CO2	Food insecurity (R) %	9.2	2018	n.a.	12.2	2016	
CO3	Obesity (R) %	13.0	2016	24.6	28.4	2016	🔴
AVAILABILITY INDICATORS							
AV1	Wheat yields - %	n.a.		76.5	82.2	2017	🟢
AV2	Agriculture expenditure - index	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
AV3	Food loss (R) %	n.a.		7.3	6.8	2013	🟢
AV4	Dietary energy supply - %	n.a.		131	131	2017	🟡
AV5	Wheat Import dependency (R) %	n.a.		62.5	65.0	2012	🟡
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.	🔴
AC4	Logistics - index	2.8	2016	2.6	2.7	2016	🟢
AC5	Inflation (R) %	2.5	2018	5.7	12.8	mult.	🔴
UTILIZATION INDICATORS							
UT1	Drinking water access - %	88.5	2015	84.3	86.9	2015	🟡
UT2	Sanitation access - %	68.0	2015	78.9	80.8	2015	🟡
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	🟡
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	🔴
ST4	Production variability (R) - $1,000/capita	n.a.		10.3	10.1	2016	🟡
ST5	Supply variability (R) - kcal/cap/day	n.a.		32.8	29.8	2013	🟢

(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

Jordan spans over 89,000 km² of which just 2 per cent is arable and 75 per cent is sparsely populated desert or semi-desert. Jordan can be divided into three main geophysical areas that include a desert in the east and south, uplands east of the Jordan River in the centre and north and the Jordan valley on the western flank of the country, which forms the northern tip of the African Rift Valley.[1] Rainfall is limited with the uplands getting most rain with an annual average of 200-600 mm. The Jordan River is used for irrigated agriculture while most groundwater resources are used for cities, industries and tourism.

Box 1. A haven for refugees

Just under one third of Jordan's population of 11 million are refugees. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there were 660,000 registered Syrian refugees as of April 2019, most of whom had arrived before 2013, when the Syrian conflict started. In addition, there are also refugees from Iraq, the Sudan and Yemen. The country also harbors large numbers of Palestinians who came as refugees mainly in 1948 and in 1967. Many among them have been naturalized and have now full Jordanian citizenship.

Several international organizations, including WFP that has the largest presence, are involved in ensuring the food security of the refugees. However, it is reported that 0.5 per cent of Jordanian households is also considered food insecure, and an additional 5.7 per cent is considered vulnerable to food insecurity. Targeted programmes of in-kind distribution and food vouchers are the most common approaches to ensure the stability of food and nutritional security. WFP assisted over 1 million people in October 2019, half of who received cash transfers, while nearly half a million Jordanian and Syrian children received school snack to ameliorate their nutritional status.

Source: Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), 2019; and World Food Programme (WFP), 2020.

1 Bickerton, I. J. and others, 2020.

B. Socioeconomy

The gross domestic product (GDP) amounted to about $44 billion in 2019, or about $4,400 per capita, making Jordan a middle-income country.[2] Agriculture makes up 3-4 per cent of GDP; it accounted up to 40 per cent in the early 1950s with the decline attributed to a loss of farmland due to occupation, expansion of cities on the most fertile soils notably in the highland and labour emigration to neighbouring countries and to cities. About 4 per cent of the active labour force is engaged in agriculture and agriculture-related activities.[3]

C. Agriculture and food security

Jordan produces fruits and vegetables in excess as they form the bulk of its exports. However, at national level, the country remains heavily reliant on imports for its food supply, especially for cereals such as wheat, which is the basis of the local diet. The Jordanian Government had traditionally relied on bread subsidies as a form of social support. However, these subsidies have recently come under criticism as they do not distinguish between rich and poor and, in 2018, were replaced by a targeted subsidies programme and a food waste-reduction initiative. Subsidized barley is also available to pastoralists; however, the impact of this practice on food security and on livelihoods has not been explored.

2 IMF, n. d.
3 World Bank, 2020a.

Data and trends

A. Core indicators

- **Prevalence of undernourishment (CO1)** increased sharply between 2010 and 2016 from 8.2 per cent to 13.5 per cent, respectively, slightly surpassing the Arab regional average of 12.1 per cent. This increase might be a result of the Syrian refugee influx into Jordan following the Syrian conflict;
- **Prevalence of severe food insecurity (CO2)** was reported to be experienced by 13.9 per cent of the population. Data for 2010 do not exist; however, compared to 2014-2016, this prevalence decreased from 14.7 per cent,[4] indicating a favourable trend, albeit still a high value, higher than the Arab average of 12.2 per cent;
- **Prevalence of adult obesity (CO3)** stood at 35.5 per cent in 2016, one of the highest in the Arab region, and above the region average of 28.4 per cent. This comes as an increase from the 2010-recorded value of 31.9 per cent. In Jordan, obesity is more pronounced in women (43.1 per cent) than in men (28.2 per cent).[5]

B. Availability

- **Wheat yield to potential (AV1)** was reported at 1.03 tons/ha in 2010 and 1.48 tons/ha in 2017, compared to the official potential value of 1.5 tons/ha, putting the difference between achieved and achievable yields at 99 per cent. Mueller and others put the potential wheat yield at 4.02 tons/ha;[6]
- **Agriculture orientation index (AV2)** stood at 0.14 in 2016. This is a decrease from its 2012 value of 0.18, indicating a decrease in the inclination of the State to invest in agriculture;
- **Food losses to food available (AV3)** recorded increased slightly between 2010 and 2017 from 4.02 per cent to 4.44 per cent, respectively. This happened concurrently with an increase in production, imports (almost two-fold) and exports (more than double);[7]

4 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2019.
5 World Bank, n. d.
6 Mueller, N. D. and others, 2012.
7 Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), n. d.

- **Average dietary energy supply adequacy (AV4)** dropped from 122 per cent in 2010 to 114 per cent in 2017. The value is well below the Arab regional average of 131 per cent, meaning that food availability could be a challenge notably among the most vulnerable;
- **Wheat import dependency (AV5)** is high as Jordan relies greatly on the global food market. It increased to 97 per cent in 2017 from 91.1 per cent in 2010 and 93.6 per cent in 2012, which makes it vulnerable to global markets gyrations as well as the impact of the volatile regional geopolitics;
- **Water resources used in agriculture (AV6)** was officially reported at 57 per cent in 2018. Considering that Jordan is one of the most water-scarce countries in the Arab region (96.58 m^3/capita/year) and the low Government orientation towards agriculture, it is considered high and unsustainable.

C. Access

- **Poverty at $3.2/day (AC1)** was reported at 2.1 per cent in 2010, which was a substantial and continuous decrease from its all-time high of 17.2 per cent in 1992,[8] implying a strong commitment to eradicate poverty;
- **Food consumption share of expenditures (AC2)** was 39.6 per cent in 2010 and decreased to 32.7 per cent in 2017, implying that, on average, Jordanian households spend about one third of their income on food;
- **Unemployment rate (AC3)** increased between 2010 and 2018 from 12.6 per cent to 18.6 per cent, respectively, based on official sources, which is well above the regional average of 10.4 per cent. Youth (35.6 per cent) and female (24.1 per cent) unemployment were much higher than male unemployment (13.3 per cent) in 2016;[9]
- **Logistical performance (AC4)** shows a favourable trend increasing from 2.7 in 2010 to 3 in 2016, implying improving conditions in the overall food supply chains;
- **Inflation, consumer prices (AC5)** decreased slightly from 4.8 per cent in 2010 to 4.5 per cent in 2018, which is well below the regional average but slightly higher than the accepted level for a healthy economy.

D. Utilization

- **Population using basic water services (UT1)** was constant between 2010 and 2017 at 98.9 per cent, above the regional average (87 per cent) but slightly below the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target of 100 per cent;
- **Population using basic sanitation services (UT2)** was almost constant between 2010 and 2017 at 97.3 per cent, well above the regional average (81 per cent) though lower than the 2030 SDG target of 100 per cent;

8 World Bank, n. d.
9 International Labour Organization (ILO), n. d.

- **Stunting in children under five years (UT3)** was 7.8 per cent in 2012, well below the Arab regional average (22.9 per cent) and the 2030 global nutrition target of the World Health Assembly (WHA) of 12.2 per cent.[10] However, it needs to be brought below 2.5 per cent;
- **Wasting in children under five years (UT4)** had a low prevalence of 2.4 per cent in 2012, below the regional average of 8.7 per cent. Although categorized as low severity of malnutrition by the World Health Organization (WHO), it needs to be eradicated;
- **Prevalence of anaemia among women (UT5)** reached an alarming high at 42.6 per cent in 2017-2018 while it was only 29.5 per cent in 2010. This is well above the Arab regional average (35.5 per cent) and the situation needs close attention.

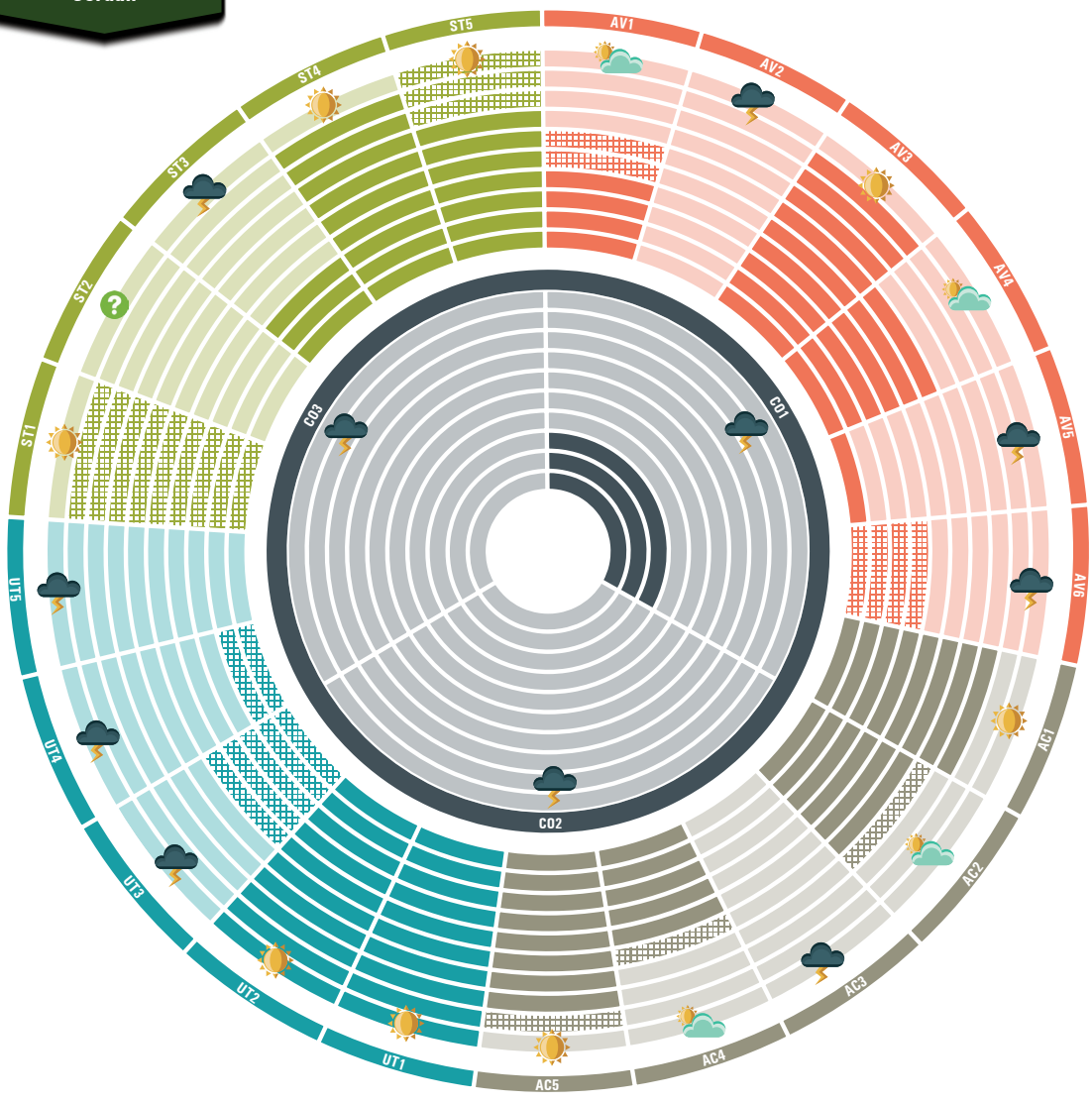
E. Stability

- **Climate change vulnerability (ST1)** is at 0.05, indicating that Jordan is not significantly affected by weather-related disasters along with sea-level rise and loss of agricultural productivity. This does not mean, however, that Jordan is completely safe from all impacts of climate change;
- **Food price anomalies (ST2)** data are not available;
- **Political stability (ST3)** ranking decreased from about 35 in 2010 to 28 in 2017, most probably due to the influx of refugees and the upheavals from neighbouring countries;
- **Food production variability (ST4)** remained relatively small and consistent between 2010 and 2016 at about $6,400[11]/capita as the country is not a major food producer while the most consequential is irrigated;
- **Food supply variability (ST5)** decreased significantly from 44 kcal/capita/day in 2010 to 7 kcal/capita/day in 2013. Considering the current ADESA, this is a safe margin of variability to avoid that the country falls into a severe food insecurity trap.

10 FAO and others, 2019.
11 Constant 2004-2006 International USD.

Food security dashboard

Jordan



2010 Data: Latest Data:

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

Food security indicators, Jordan

Indicators		Arab		Jordan			
		Latest		2010	Latest		Trend
Code	Description	Value	Year	Value	Value	Year	
CORE INDICATORS							
CO1	Undernourishment (R) %	12.1	2016	8.2	13.5	2016	🔴
CO2	Food insecurity (R) %	12.2	2016	n.a.	13.9	2016	
CO3	Obesity (R) %	28.4	2016	31.9	35.5	2016	🔴
AVAILABILITY INDICATORS							
AV1	Wheat yields - %	82.2	2017	68.7	98.7	2017	🟢
AV2	Agriculture expenditure - index	n.a.		n.a.	0.14	2016	
AV3	Food loss (R) %	6.8	2013	4.0	4.4	2017	🔴
AV4	Dietary energy supply - %	131	2017	122	114	2017	🔴
AV5	Wheat Import dependency (R) %	65.0	2012	91.1	97.0	2017	🔴
AV6	Agriculture water (R) %	n.a.		n.a.	57.0	2018	
ACCESS INDICATORS							
AC1	Poverty (R) %	16.6	mult.	2.1	n.a.		
AC2	Food consumption (R) %	n.a.		39.6	32.7	2017	🟢
AC3	Unemployment (R) %	10.4	mult.	12.6	18.6	2018	🔴
AC4	Logistics - index	2.7	2016	2.7	3.0	2016	🟢
AC5	Inflation (R) %	12.8	mult.	4.8	4.5	2018	🟢
UTILIZATION INDICATORS							
UT1	Drinking water access - %	86.9	2015	98.9	98.9	2017	🟡
UT2	Sanitation access - %	80.8	2015	97.5	97.3	2017	🟡
UT3	Child stunting (R) %	22.9	mult.	n.a.	7.8	2012	
UT4	Child wasting (R) %	8.7	mult.	n.a.	2.4	2012	
UT5	Women anaemia (R) %	35.5	2016	29.5	42.6	2018	🔴
STABILITY INDICATORS							
ST1	Climate change (R) - index	0.1	2019	n.a.	0.05	2019	
ST2	Price Anomalies (R) - index	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
ST3	Political stability - ranking	14	2017	35	28	2017	🔴
ST4	Production variability (R) - $1,000/capita	10.1	2016	6.3	6.4	2016	🟡
ST5	Supply variability (R) - kcal/cap/day	29.8	2013	44.0	7.0	2013	🟢

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

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

Note: Unless indicated otherwise, all data are from national sources.

Food security snapshot

A. Drivers and determinants

The framework shows that Jordan is challenged in the core pillar of food security as all three indicators, namely, undernourishment, food insecurity experience and obesity, require urgent actions.

Hotspot areas include the following:

- **Availability:** agriculture orientation (AV2), wheat import dependency (AV5) and water use in agriculture (AV6);
- **Access:** unemployment (AC3);
- **Utilization:** wasting among children (UT4) and anaemia among women (UT5);
- **Stability:** political stability (ST3).

In addition, the country needs to address the issue of data availability in quality, accuracy and timeliness as these are needed to better understand the true extent and severity of the food-security situation and to devise appropriate remedial measures.

The conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic has been a major shock to the social and economic systems of Jordan. The influx of Syrian refugees and the closure of trade routes across the borders have affected food security at many levels, the impact of which can be seen in the alarming data for CO1 and CO2. Jordan also suffers from galloping obesity, which is more pronounced among women. The double burden of malnutrition is common to many developing countries and indicates issues in food security that encompass malnutrition and are caused by poor diets and excess consumption.

B. Action areas

Jordan is fully dependent on food imports, especially for its main staple: wheat. Local production of wheat and barley covers a small fraction of the nation's needs. It should be expanded and made integral to pastoralism as it relies almost exclusively on rainfall and does not threaten the very limited water supply. However, the reliance on deep underground water for production of field crops and fruit trees in the highlands and in the margins of the badia needs to be reassessed, as this water comes with a large opportunity cost. The Ghor valley offers fertile lands and some water to produce cash crops destined for export. However, water availability and quality are both declining, and so are the profits from agriculture. The persistence of agriculture in the Ghor needs to be weighed against the need for water in other sectors and against

the social role provided by agriculture. All these recommendations require further commitment by the State that appears to be declining over time according to the Agriculture Expenditure Orientation Index.

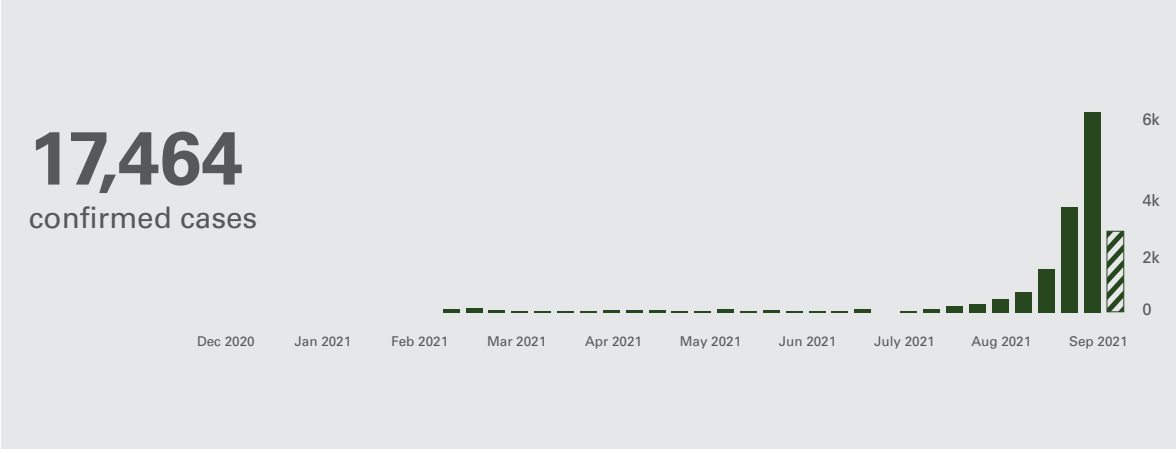
There is some concern related to poverty levels due to the increasing unemployment and to the significant proportion of income spent on food. The evaluation of the new subsidies plan is required for the purpose of adjustment to provide social and economic support to the most vulnerable.

Much work remains to be done at the level of nutrition. Confirming the malnutrition diagnosis exposed by the large values for obesity, especially in women, it also appears that the levels of anaemia in women is particularly large. Thus, nutritional policies are urgently needed, especially focused on women.

Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic reached Jordan in early March 2020 and, by October, had affected more than 17,000 people with around 120 deaths recorded (WHO, 2020).[12] Most often, Jordan records less than 50 daily occurrences of COVID-19 though it had witnessed a succession of small peaks with a sudden large increase in September reaching up to 1,500 cases daily.

Weekly cases



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

Due to the restrictive measures[13] implemented to control the pandemic, the number of food insecure people is expected to rise as rapid needs assessments of vulnerable people showed that 72.5 per cent had difficulties covering basic needs and 36 per cent experienced an inability to access markets.[14] Unemployment was high before the pandemic, estimated at 19.1 per cent, and could be expected to increase.[15]

12 WHO, n.d

13 Suspension of schools and universities, closure of airports and borders, prohibition of public gatherings and curfew from 18:00 – 10:00.

14 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2020; and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2020.

15 World Bank, 2020b.

Local food production was affected by the restrictive local emergency plan as it prevented agricultural input supplies from being distributed while famers were unable to reach their lands, which added challenges to on-farm compulsory daily activities such as spraying and harvesting.[16] Food supply was also impacted by trade restrictions and other measures implemented such as delays registered for food shipments from Egypt and India.[17] As a result, vulnerable population might have suffered from a lack of sufficient food supplies during the month of June.[18]

COVID-19 increased the demand for food by 80 per cent, which led to an increase in food prices.[19]

The Government issued specific guidelines to ensure safe food handling to avoid the spread of the virus through food commodities and coordinated with local private companies and factories to support local food production to reduce dependency on imports and global prices volatility while also increasing strategic reserves for safe and high-quality food.[20]

16 Al Jazeera, 2020; and World Food Programme (WFP) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2020.
17 WFP and FAO, 2020.
18 Arab News, 2020.
19 WFP and FAO, 2020.
20 World Food Programme (WFP) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2020; MENAFN, 2020; and International Monetary Fund (IMF), 2020.

Box 2. Examples of initiatives

Government-led

In April, agricultural input suppliers were permitted to resume work while around $14 million in zero-interest loans were allocated to support farmers affected by both the COVID-19 pandemic and recent storms. To facilitate their movement as well as those of farmer and essential workers in the agricultural and food supply chain, electronic travel permits were distributed.[a]

Jordan facilitated the export of surplus of locally produced food by setting up an online import/export licensing system, which, at the same time, facilitated the import of bulgur and pulses from Turkey as an alternative new market.[b]

The Government distributed food, water, oil and other necessities to poor communities, including Syrian refugees. It provided a stipend to the most vulnerable while also ordering private employers to keep paying full salaries to those working from home and at least half salaries to those being furloughed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.[c]

The Ministry of Social Development, in coordination with the National Aid Fund, helped 30,000 families purchase food and non-food items for six months through e-vouchers worth $141.00 per month as of April 2020.[d]

Other initiatives

The International Monetary Fund provided Jordan with $1.3 billion in assistance in March to reform the economy while helping with the pandemic.[e] WFP has continued to provide humanitarian assistance including cash transfers to refugees despite the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

a World Food Programme (WFP) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2020.
b Ibid.
c Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2020. Jordan after COVID19-: From Crisis Adjustment to Crisis Management.
d Almamlakatv, 2020; and World Food Programme (WFP) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2020.
e IMF, 2020.

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