Arab food security monitoring framework

Country reviews

Libya

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Key Messages

The monitoring framework highlights a substantial lack of data for proper food security monitoring in Libya. However, rates of obesity and anaemia among women are elevated while at the same time, the country is in the middle of substantial sociopolitical instability. 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.

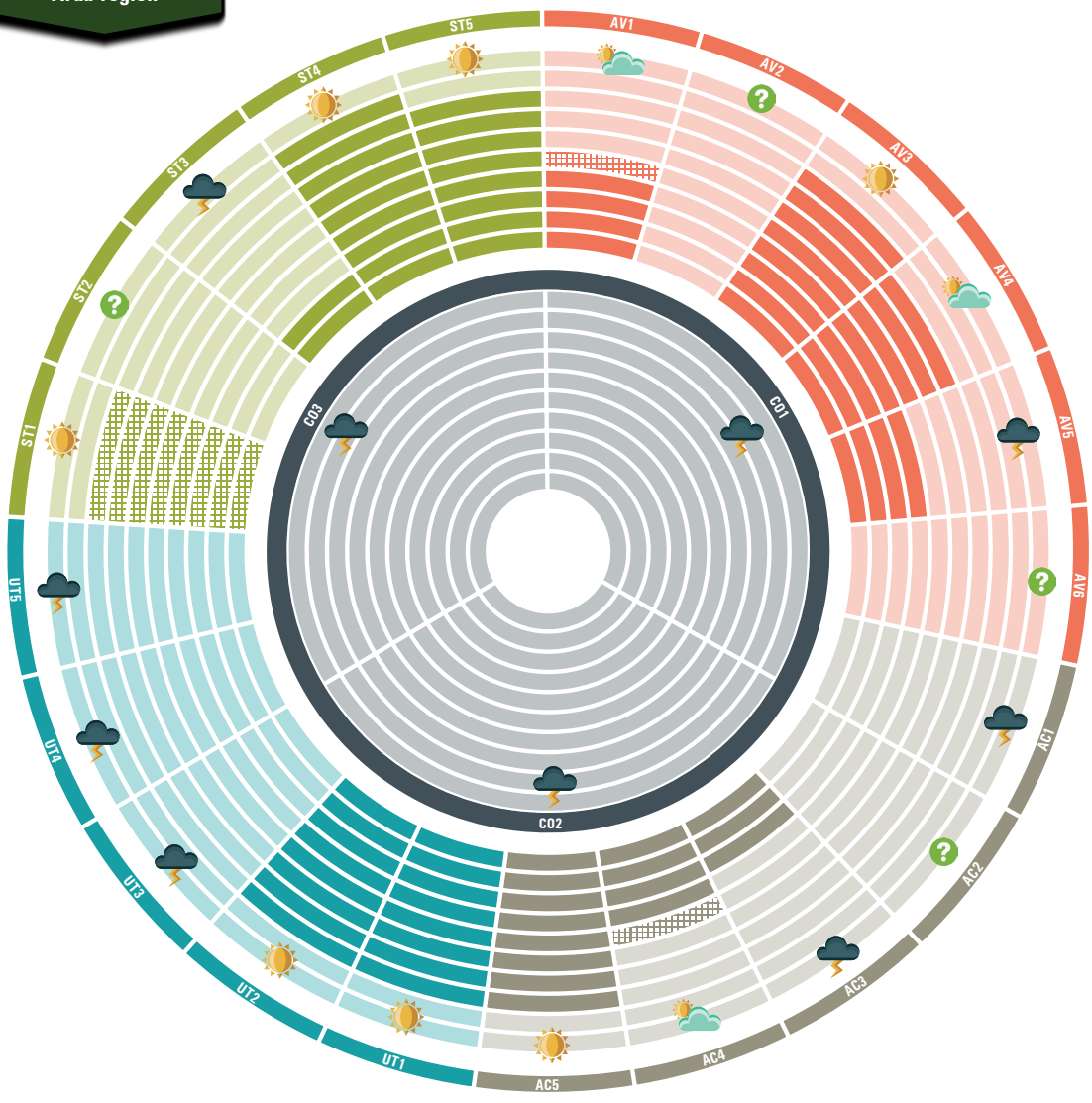
6 See https://www.unescwa.org/events/training2-food-security-monitoring-framework-arab.

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

A vast (1,775,500 km^2), oil-producing country of the southern Mediterranean, Libya is mostly desert, and economic activity as well as population are concentrated on the littoral and immediate hinterland, except for the inland oil-producing facilities. Libya has no permanent rivers but numerous wadis that fill with flash floods. It has also extensive underground water reserves, including the Nubian Sandstone Aquifer system that allowed the construction of the Great Man-Made River.[1]

Box 1. Libya's migrants and refugees

Up to the early 2000's, foreign migrants made up one third of the Libyan population. A number of them worked in agriculture and food-related sectors. Many left during the crisis, and their numbers decreased dramatically to reach an estimated 700,000 in 2019.

The country has also traditionally been a transit hub for African immigrants to Europe. The early 1990s, for instance, saw a rush of Sudanese refugees from Darfur, a number of whom settled without legal papers in southern oases and found employment in the livestock sector.

Today, migrants are among the most vulnerable population in Libya, and nearly half of them have been reported to be food insecure. The war also led to the internal displacement of large numbers of Libyans, many among whom remain unsettled to this day. According to the 2019 Libya Humanitarian Needs Overview, 11 per cent of the population (820,000 people, half of whom are migrants or in transit) are in need of assistance. Many of these receive support from the food distribution programme of the WFP whose target is to reach 150,000 people per month. These include migrants and refugees from other African nations, in coordination with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Source: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2019.

1 Brown and others, 2020.

B. Socioeconomy

Libya's economy is essentially oil-based, and oil exports constitute the main share of the gross domestic product (GDP). Since the beginning of the crisis in 2011, oil production declined by nearly one half, with repercussions on the national GDP. In 2018, GDP was estimated at $48.3 billion corresponding to a per capita GDP of about $7,200. The agriculture share of GDP was estimated at 1.8 per cent in 2008.[2] The population of 6 million is very young, with 40 per cent under the age of 18, and unemployment was estimated at 30 per cent before the crisis. About 70 per cent of the workforce was employed by the State.

C. Agriculture and food security

Hydrocarbon exports cover for food imports, and the State had put in place a strong social protection system that involved significant food subsidies, which targeted the native population and is thus not available to migrants. The protracted civil war caused food shortages that required assistance from WFP and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). According to FAO, food insecurity is mainly due to the lack of economic access rather than availability.[3]

Although the country imports 80 per cent of its food, agriculture and especially pastoralism can be a significant source of livelihoods. Around 13 million hectares, classified as pastures, form the basis of a livestock sector that was once heavily subsidized but that, after the crisis, has shrunk. Moreover, 2.4 million Libyans were moderately or severely food insecure and 69 per cent of the population was marginally food insecure.[4]

2 World Bank, n. d.
3 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), n. d.
4 FAO and others, 2020; and World Food Programme (WFP), 2020a.

Data and trends

A. Core indicators

- **Prevalence of undernourishment (CO1)** data are not available.
- **Prevalence of severe food insecurity (CO2)** was recorded at 9.9 per cent in 2016. It is below the Arab region's average of 12.2 per cent and is due to the on-going crisis that is impacting livelihoods.
- **Prevalence of adult obesity (CO3)** was at 28.8 per cent in 2010 and 32.5 per cent in 2016. Female obesity is more pronounced with 39.6 per cent of women affected compared to male obesity that stood at 25 per cent in 2016.[5]

B. Availability

- **Wheat yield to potential (AV1)** reached only 19.5 per cent of its full potential in 2010, with an insignificant change in 2017 (19.7 per cent). Mueller and others estimate that the potential wheat yield is 3.98 tons/ha.[6]
- **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 one of the highest among Arab countries, with 135 per cent in 2010 and 139 per cent in 2017, indicating a large availability of food.
- **Wheat import dependency (AV5)** data are not available.
- **Water resources used in agriculture (AV6)** stood at 692.86 per cent in 2018 even though the country has extremely limited renewable water resources. Water availability is at 111.5 m^3/capita/year, which is lower than the absolute water scarcity threshold of 500 m^3/capita/year.

5 OurWorldInData, n. d.
6 Mueller, N. D. and others, 2012.

C. Access

- **Poverty ratio at $3.2/day (AC1)** data are not available.
- **Food consumption share of expenditures (AC2)** data are not available.
- **Unemployment rate (AC3)** remained stable at 17 per cent between 2010 and 2018, with female unemployment at 24.6 per cent and male unemployment at 14.9 per cent.[7] The gender gap could play a significant role in household access to food.
- **Logistical performance (AC4)** slightly decreased from 2.3 in 2010 to 2.1 in 2018, which could affect food access particularly in remote areas.
- **Inflation, consumer prices (AC5)** slightly decreased from 2.8 per cent in 2010 to 2.6 per cent in 2013. Inflation is within the accepted average range for a healthy economic growth.

D. Utilization

- **Population using basic drinking water services (UT1)** reached 98.5 per cent of the population as reported in 2017, bringing the country a step closer to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 6.1 by 2030.
- **Population using basic sanitation services (UT2)** was at 100 per cent meaning that the country has achieved SDG target 6.2.
- **Stunting in children under five years (UT3)** data are not available.
- **Wasting in children under five years (UT4)** data are not available.
- **Prevalence of anaemia among women (UT5)** recorded an increase from 30.3 per cent in 2010 to 32.5 per cent in 2016, and although still below the Arab regional average of 35.5 per cent, this value remains higher than the World Health Assembly (WHA) 2030 target of 15.2 per cent.[8]

E. Stability

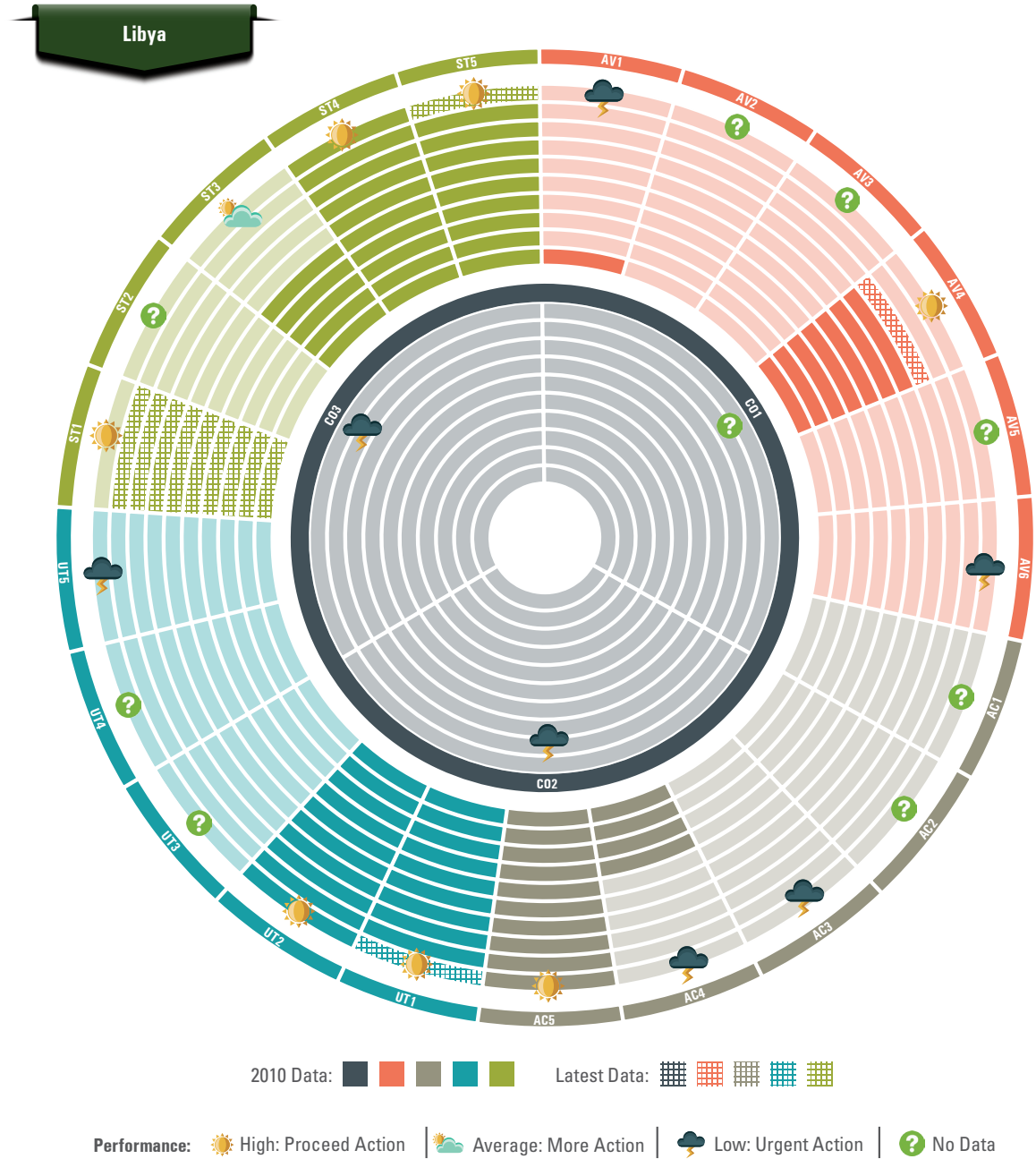
- **Climate change vulnerability (ST1)** stands at 0.03, indicating that the country is not significantly impacted by increased weather-related disasters, sea-level rise and loss of agricultural productivity.
- **Food price anomalies (ST2)** data are not available.
- **Political stability (ST3)** ranking dropped significantly from 47 in 2010 to about 2 in 2018, indicating a serious shift in security that is likely to affect availability, access and utilization of food.
- **Food production variability (ST4)** already low, remained fixed at around $3,000[9] per

7 World Bank, n. d.
8 FAO and others, 2019.
9 Constant 2004-2006 International USD.

capita between 2010 and 2016, indicating that food production did not experience any serious shocks during the on-going crisis.

- **Food supply variability (ST5)** dropped significantly from 14 kcal/capita/day in 2010 to a more stable 6 kcal/capita/day in 2013. In light of a high average dietary energy supply adequacy, this reflects high stability in food supply.

Food security dashboard



Food security indicators, Libya

Indicators		Arab		Libya			
		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.	9.9	2016	
CO3	Obesity (R) %	28.4	2016	28.8	32.5	2016	🔴
AVAILABILITY INDICATORS							
AV1	Wheat yields - %	82.2	2017	19.5	19.7	2017	🟡
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	135	139	2017	🟡
AV5	Wheat Import dependency (R) %	65.0	2012	n.a.	n.a.		
AV6	Agriculture water (R) %	n.a.		n.a.	692.9	2018	
ACCESS INDICATORS							
AC1	Poverty (R) %	16.6	mult.	n.a.	n.a.		
AC2	Food consumption (R) %	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
AC3	Unemployment (R) %	10.4	mult.	17.6	17.3	2018	🟡
AC4	Logistics - index	2.7	2016	2.3	2.1	2018	🔴
AC5	Inflation (R) %	12.8	mult.	2.8	2.6	2013	🟢
UTILIZATION INDICATORS							
UT1	Drinking water access - %	86.9	2015	93.2	98.5	2017	🟢
UT2	Sanitation access - %	80.8	2015	99.1	100.0	2017	🟡
UT3	Child stunting (R) %	22.9	mult.	n.a.	n.a.		
UT4	Child wasting (R) %	8.7	mult.	n.a.	n.a.		
UT5	Women anaemia (R) %	35.5	2016	30.3	32.5	2016	🔴
STABILITY INDICATORS							
ST1	Climate change (R) - index	0.1	2019	n.a.	0.03	2019	
ST2	Price Anomalies (R) - index	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
ST3	Political stability - ranking	14	2017	47	2	2018	🔴
ST4	Production variability (R) - $1,000/capita	10.1	2016	2.8	3.0	2016	🔴
ST5	Supply variability (R) - kcal/cap/day	29.8	2013	14.0	6.0	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 in this table and framework are from international sources, including FAOSTAT, ILOSTAT, World Bank, and AQUASTAT.

Food security snapshot

A. Drivers and determinants

As noted above, due to the on-going crisis in Libya and the fact that many indicators lack data, it is difficult to characterize the precise food security situation. Nonetheless, the framework shows that the two outcome core indicators perform poorly, namely, food insecurity experience (CO2) and obesity (CO3), while undernourishment (CO1) lacked data.

Hotspot areas include the following:

- **Availability:** wheat yields (AV1) and water use in agriculture (AV6);
- **Access:** unemployment (AC3) and logistics (AC4);
- **Utilization:** anaemia among women (UT3).

The main problem in Libya is the protracted conflict in its civil and geopolitical dimensions. There is a serious lack of data, and the reliability of the available data is limited, in great part due to the conditions during which they were collected. For instance, the data on severe food insecurity do not match the information obtained from other FAO sources,[10] which indicates that a large proportion of the migrant population suffers from food insecurity.

As the lack of food security in Libya has been described as a failure of the economic access dimension, it is not surprising that the rates of obesity continue to be high, as those who have the capacity to access food will do so in surplus. There is also a serious issue related to the logistical aspect of food access (physical access) as entire regions can be inaccessible due to confrontations and violence.

B. Action areas

The policy priorities for enhancing food security in Libya should include first and foremost the cessation of the conflict. Until that time, the main problems to be addressed, as with other conflict countries, are the following:

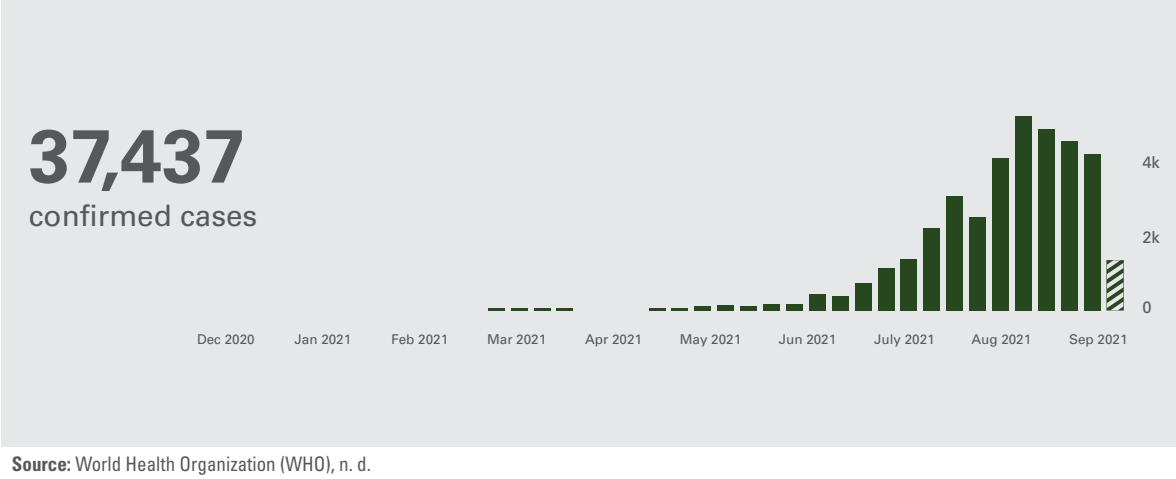
1. Addressing the acute food security failures through humanitarian assistance.
2. Improving economic access to the most vulnerable, especially those who were dependent on the State and can no longer receive wages.
3. Enhancing the resilience of the agrarian communities and their contribution to the availability of food by improving access to innovative and environmentally sustainable technologies for production in the drylands.

10 FAO, n. d.

Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic reached Libya towards the end of March 2020 and, by October, had affected more than 37,000 people with close to 600 deaths recorded. COVID-19 in Libya reached its peak in September when more than 800 daily cases were recorded. Daily occurrences are slowly decreasing but still above 500 on a daily basis.[11]

Weekly cases



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

Due to the restrictive measures implemented to control the pandemic,[12] the number of food-insecure people are projected to increase to 683,000 individuals compared to pre-COVID levels.,[13,14] WFP needs assessment and mobile Vulnerability Analysis Mapping (mVAM) on samples of vulnerable people showed that one out of three respondents, namely, refugees, migrants and internally displaced people, had poor or borderline food consumption, and 48 per cent experienced an inability to access markets.[15]

11 WHO, n.d.
12 Suspension of schools, markets, cafes, mosques, public gatherings and some businesses; 24 hours curfew; and suspension of flights.
13 Out of these, 474,000 are Libyans and 209,000 are migrants and refugees. The percentage of food insecure internally displaced persons is projected to increase from 9 per cent pre-COVID to 12 per cent post-COVID and that of migrants and refugees to increase from 18 per cent to 32 per cent, respectively
14 WFP, 2020a.
15 Ibid.

Unemployment, which was high before the pandemic, increased to affect 70 per cent of migrants and refugees,[16] while the payment of salaries of public-sector employees, who represent 85 per cent of the labour force, was delayed.[17]

Local food production was affected by the continuing conflicts, increasing prices of agricultural inputs and measures restricting movement, which prevented farmers from reaching their lands.[18] Food supply was also impacted by trade restrictions and other measures implemented, such as security restrictions at checkpoints, together with a shortage of foreign currency, as for example imports of beans and pasta were reduced.[19] Supply chain disruptions, coupled with the closure of shops, consumers' panic buying and suppliers' stockpiling, caused the population to suffer from a lack of sufficient food supplies as shortages started in April; in a recent assessment, 48 per cent of the cities reported food shortages of basic food items such as vegetables, eggs and wheat products.[20]

COVID-19 led to an increase in food prices; for instance, the price of minimum expenditure baskets increased by as much as 23 per cent in May compared to pre-pandemic price levels.[21] However, prices declined afterwards, except in the east of Libya, because of the decline in the cost of oil. The purchasing power of migrants decreased; and 33 per cent reported an inability to buy food because of increased prices and 28 per cent reported lacking support to buy food. This situation pushed more than 100,000 individuals to ask for food assistance between March and June.[22]

In response to low or lacking income and increased prices, including cooking gas, migrants adopted negative coping strategies such as consuming crisis or emergency food. One in every three migrants surveyed reported low food consumption and poor dietary diversity,[23] and 70 per cent of internally displaced people in the mVAM reported adopting crisis and emergency food methods leading to malnutrition.[24]

Due to funding shortages, WFP is collaborating with other agencies and prioritizing assistance to the most vulnerable people to ensure their food security.[25]

16 Migrants, refugees and internally displaced people are the most vulnerable because they are daily workers and lack social safety nets.
17 WFP, 2020b.
18 FAO, n. d.; and WFP, 2020a.
19 WFP, 2020b.
20 OCHA, 2020.
21 Ibid.
22 WFP, 2020a.
23 OCHA, 2020.
24 WFP, 2020a.
25 Ibid.

Box 2. Examples of initiatives

In March, the food security sector provided food assistance to more than 87,000 internally displaced people, non-displaced and host communities, and migrants and refugees in detention hubs and urban settings.[a]

FAO provided households impacted by COVID-19-related restrictive measures with agricultural livelihood materials, and training on climate-smart and conservation agriculture to improve their capability to produce their own food in the coming season.[b]

In April, WFP provided commodity e-vouchers to 5,000 needy individuals in Tripoli during Ramadan using a mobile application. It is aiming to expand the system to other areas outside of Tripoli.[c]

WFP and FAO are assessing the impact of COVID-19 on agricultural livelihoods.[d]

WFP assisted 54,000 people during the months of March, April and May through regular food distributions, e-vouchers, ready-to-eat foods, school feeding, and inter-agency rapid response modality.[e]

WFP and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) collaborated to distribute food aid to migrants in urban areas.[f]

a OCHA, 2020.
b WFP, 2020b.
c Ibid.
d Ibid.
e WFP, 2020a.
f Ibid.

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