Arab food security monitoring framework

Country reviews

Qatar

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Key Messages

The monitoring framework highlights the lack of data for monitoring food security in Qatar. Rates of obesity are high, as are rates of anaemia among women. 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.

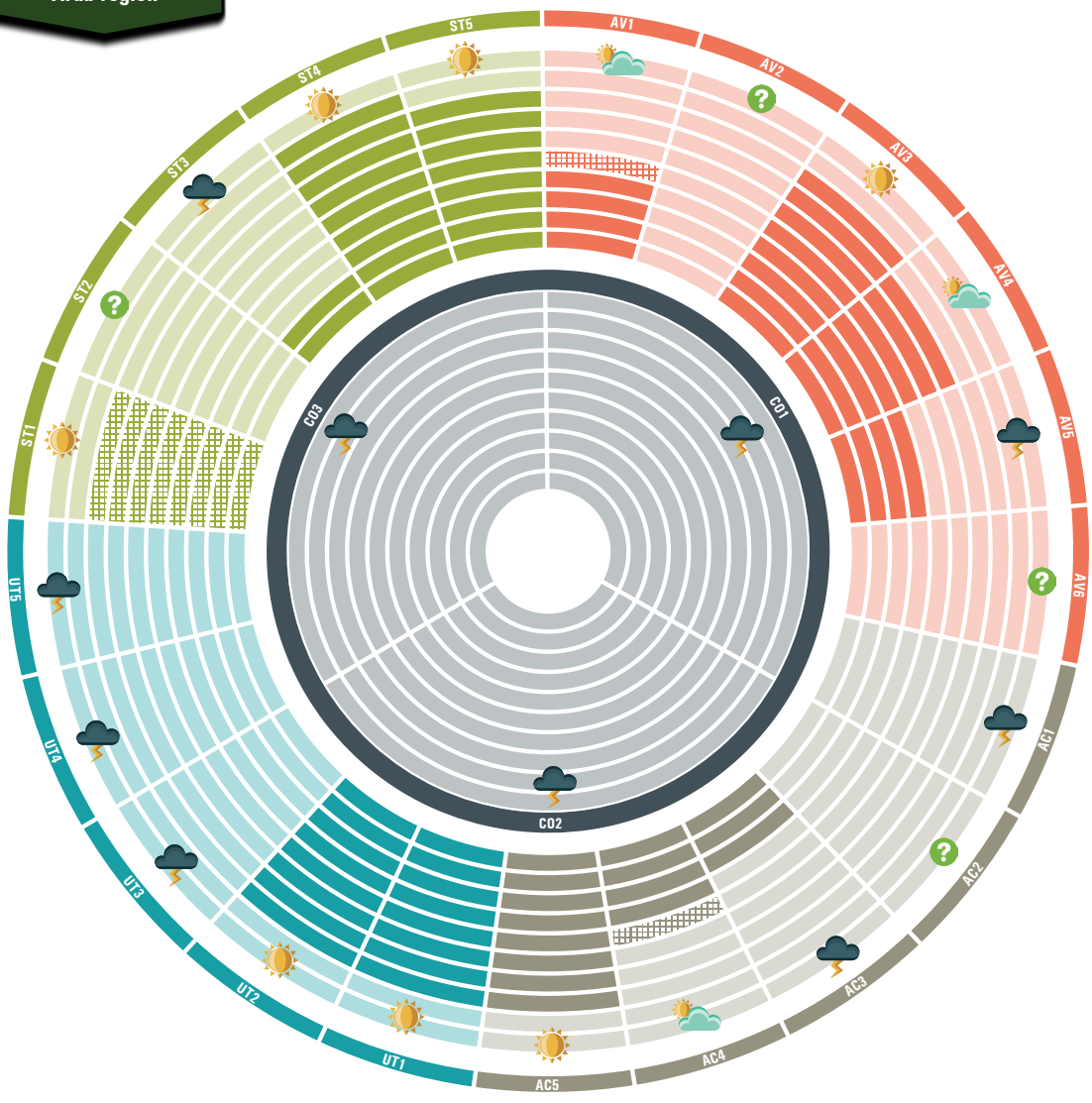
6 See https://www.unescwa.org/events/training2-food-security-monitoring-framework-arab.

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	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 Emirate of Qatar is located on a small peninsula (11,581 km^2). Qatar is mostly desert and low-lying with the highest point not exceeding much more than 100 meters. It has no permanent bodies of freshwater and receives very limited quantities of rainfall. Agricultural land is around 5 per cent of the total area but is affected by salinity due to poor irrigation practices.[1]

Box 1. A food security investment arm

Hassad Food was created in 2008 as the investment arm of the Qatar Investment Authority, the country's sovereign fund, with the purpose of focusing on the country's food security in the wake of the global food crisis.

Hassad gained additional strength after the blockade on Qatar in 2017, as its efforts became more focused and multiplied. The company invested in local farms for fodder production, although this approach is now being reconsidered in view of the limited amounts of available freshwater.

It also acquired stakes in Sunrise Foods International, a cereals trading company, and is working on agreements for continued exports even in case of global food shortages.

It has also established an extension system to promote investments in high-tech farming. Along with some continued overseas investment efforts, this has allowed Qatar to absorb the shock of the blockade.

Source: Piesse, M., 2019; and Walid, T., 2009.

B. Socioeconomy

Its economy is fully fossil fuel-based. Total GDP amounts to about $191 billion, corresponding to about $127,000 per capita purchasing power parity (PPP). The per capita gross domestic product (GDP) is one of the highest in the world.[2] The population is just

1 Crystal, J.A. and J.D. Anthony (2020). Qatar.
2 World Bank, n. d.

under three million, but 90 per cent of the inhabitants are expatriates. There are no truly rural areas, and the population is clustered around Doha City.

The country imports 90 per cent of its food needs and is reliant on maritime trade through the Straits of Hormuz for 80 per cent of its wheat supply, which makes it vulnerable to geopolitical disruptions. Until June 2017, 40 per cent of food trade took place across the border with the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, both of whom have declared a trade blockade against Qatar due to political disagreements. This catalysed further the Qatari efforts to establish new trade channels and to improve the local production of food, a policy they had engaged in since the global food price crisis of 2008.[3]

C. Agriculture and food security

The country invests overseas for its fodder production, in order to conserve the meager local water resources. Qatar is also harnessing high-tech approaches to produce locally fruits and vegetables using soilless systems that allow greater water savings and is planning to cover 70 per cent of its needs by 2023.[4]

Qatar perceives food security largely through the availability and stability lenses. This is achieved through a blend of local production, foreign agricultural investments and trade, which ensure adequate food supply and food availability. However, the utilization dimension, especially in terms of dietary transition, appears to be separate from the food security discourse.

3 Wellesley, L., 2019.
4 Ibid.

Data and trends

A. Core indicators

- **Prevalence of undernourishment (CO1)** data are not available;
- **Prevalence of severe food insecurity (CO2)** data are not available;
- **Prevalence of adult obesity (CO3)** increased from 31.1 per cent in 2010 to 35.1 per cent in 2016, much higher than the Arab regional average (28.4 per cent). The increase might be due to the current dietary habits of the Qataris. Looking into the numbers, the female obesity rate stood at 43.1 per cent whereas the male rate stood at 32.5 per cent.[5]

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)** data are not available;
- **Wheat import dependency (AV5)** data are not available;
- **Water resources used in agriculture (AV6)** was not reported for 2010 but stood at 397 per cent in 2018. This undoubtedly unsustainable practice is a result of both the prevailing water scarcity (21.98 m^3/capita/year[6]) and its use for agriculture production (dairy).

C. Access

- **Poverty ratio at $3.2/day (AC1)** data are not available;
- **Food consumption share of expenditures (AC2)** was at 12.5 per cent in 2010 and

5 World Bank, n. d.
6 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (n. d.)

12.3 per cent in 2018. This shows the high purchasing power of the country despite their high reliance on food imports;

- **Unemployment rate (AC3)** was negligible in both 2010 and 2018, at 0.5 per cent and 0.1 per cent, respectively. Female unemployment also recorded low values in Qatar at 0.63 per cent in 2018, and male unemployment at 0.06 per cent in the same year;[7]
- **Logistics performance (AC4)** was 3.5 in 2018, which was an improvement from 3 in 2010;
- **Inflation, consumer prices (AC5)** was recorded at 0.3 per cent in 2018, compared to a deflation in 2010 at -2.43 per cent. Inflation numbers are really low, which could impact the economy, but being mainly a natural resource exporter, the low inflation rates do not have a dire significance.

D. Utilization

- **Population using bBasic drinking water services (UT1)** essentially cover the entire population;
- **Population using basic sanitation services (UT2)** cover the entire population;
- **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 a slight increase between 2010 and 2017, from 25.7 per cent to 27.7 per cent. Compared to other countries of the region, this is one of the lowest values; however, it is still far from the World Health Assembly's (WHA) target for 2030.[8]

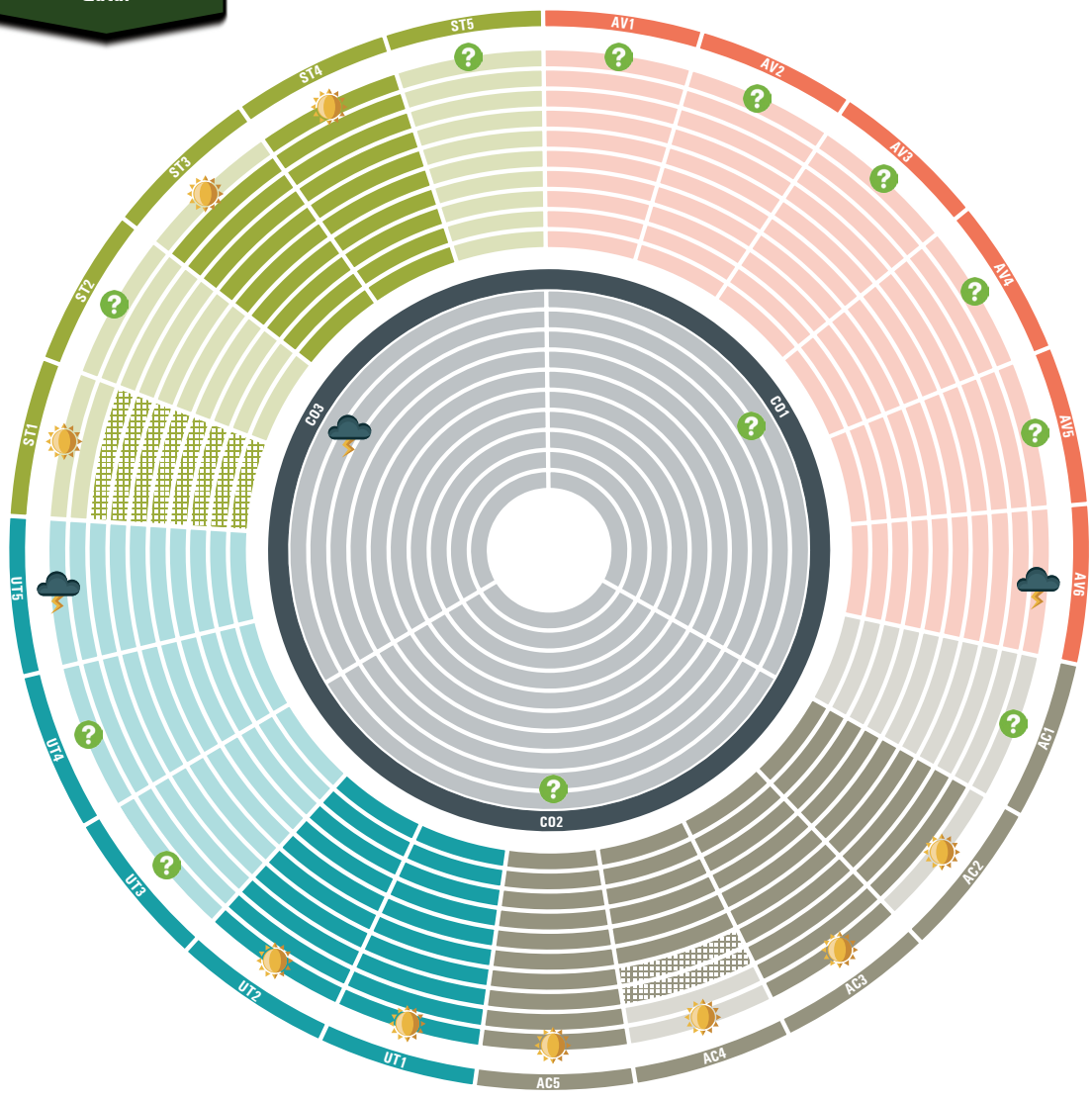
E. Stability

- **Climate change vulnerability (ST1)** was recorded at a low 0.09, meaning that the country does not seem to be prone to negative impact through climate change in relation to 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 90 in 2010 to 69 in 2018, due to the latest security developments in the region during that period as well as to the blockade;
- **Food production variability (ST4)** was low between 2010 and 2016, standing between $2,200 and $1,700, respectively.[9] This implies a high stability in the production of food, despite the potential occurrence of geopolitical shocks;
- **Food supply variability (ST5)** data are not available.

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

Food security dashboard

Qatar



2010 Data: Latest Data:

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Food security indicators, Qatar

Indicators		Arab		Qatar			
		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	31.1	35.1	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	n.a.	n.a.		
AV5	Wheat Import dependency (R) %	65.0	2012	n.a.	n.a.		
AV6	Agriculture water (R) %	n.a.		n.a.	396.6	2018	
ACCESS INDICATORS							
AC1	Poverty (R) %	16.6	mult.	n.a.	n.a.		
AC2	Food consumption (R) %	n.a.		12.5	12.3	2018	🟡
AC3	Unemployment (R) %	10.4	mult.	0.5	0.1	2018	🟢
AC4	Logistics - index	2.7	2016	3.0	3.5	2018	🟢
AC5	Inflation (R) %	12.8	mult.	-2.4	0.3	2018	🔴
UTILIZATION INDICATORS							
UT1	Drinking water access - %	86.9	2015	100.0	99.6	2017	🟡
UT2	Sanitation access - %	80.8	2015	100.0	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	25.7	27.7	2016	🔴
STABILITY INDICATORS							
ST1	Climate change (R) - index	0.1	2019	n.a.	0.09	2019	
ST2	Price Anomalies (R) - index	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
ST3	Political stability - ranking	14	2017	90	69	2018	🔴
ST4	Production variability (R) - $1,000/capita	10.1	2016	2.2	1.7	2016	🟢
ST5	Supply variability (R) - kcal/cap/day	29.8	2013	n.a.	n.a.		

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

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

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

Food security snapshot

A. Drivers and determinants

The framework results are not conclusive due to a substantial lack of data including those for undernourishment (CO1) and food insecurity experience (CO2) while obesity (CO3) is at an alarming level.

Hotspot areas include the following:

- **Availability:** water use in agriculture (AV6);
- **Access:** logistics (AC4);
- **Utilization:** anaemia among women (UT5).

Food security in Qatar is one of the best, if not the best, in the Arab region. On the availability and stability fronts, Qatar appears to be on track and to have adopted an effective strategy.

B. Action areas

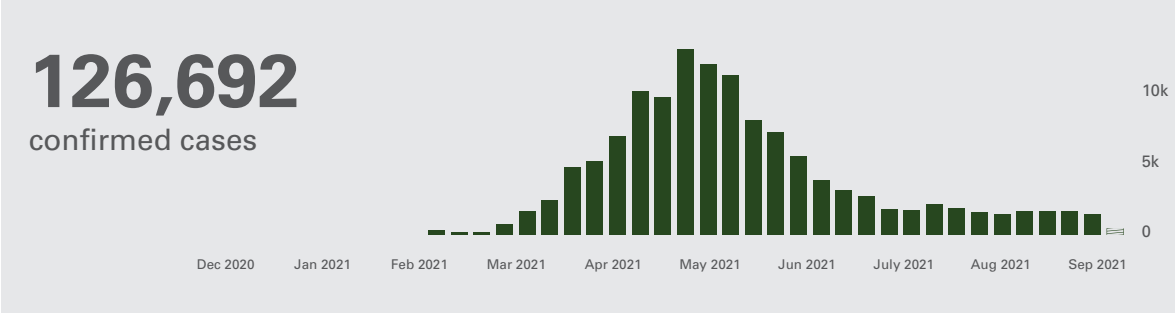
The following policy recommendations can be made based on the monitoring framework:

1. Qatar needs to collect and share its food security data with the relevant international databases;
2. Qatar's efforts in developing its food production sector need to be moderated given prevailing environmental constraints. Water must be used parsimoniously and fertilizer addition, which is reportedly high, also needs to be controlled;
3. The utilization component of food security, especially women's obesity and anaemia, needs to be urgently addressed. Dietary guidelines have been published in 2015, but their adherence must be made a strategic food security priority.

Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic reached Qatar in early March 2020 and, by early September, it had affected more than 126,000 people with more than 200 deaths recorded.[10] As per the data sourced from the World Health Organization (WHO), the daily peak was reached towards the end of May at more than 2,000 confirmed cases. Since then, the number of daily cases has declined to reach about 300.

Weekly cases



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

There are neither conclusive data on the number of severely or moderately food insecure citizens in Qatar prior to the pandemic nor an estimated number amid the pandemic. However, being a high-income country, Qatar is generally assumed to be food secure and could put in place appropriate social support mechanisms to assist the most vulnerable.

Food availability is not anticipated to be much affected amid the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown measures.[11] This is due to the sustainable measures that Qatar implemented aiming at diversifying and expanding local production.[12] Such measures included the establishment of the first local dairy and meat farm with thousands of imported cows from the United States

10 WHO, n.d.
11 Closure of all educational institutions and food outlets; placement of travel ban.
12 Al Jazeera, 2020.

and the European Union, and the usage of technology to boost the local production of fruits and vegetables that increased from less than 10 per cent to 30 per cent availability in local markets in three years.[13] During the pandemic, store shelves were always replenished with essential staple food items such as rice, sugar and oil. The Government reassured the population that food stock would be available to cover the demand of a whole year.

To mitigate the economic impacts of the pandemic, some large enterprises either reduced the salaries of their non-Qatari employees such as Qatar Airways that reduced salaries by 35 per cent or cut out employees such as Qatar Petroleum that reduced 800 jobs.[14]

Box 2. Examples of policies approved to support food availability

In March, Qatar signed an agreement with 14 new companies in an attempt to diversify its suppliers and increase its storage of essential food commodities such as wheat, edible oils, rice, frozen red meat, long-life milk, powdered milk and sugar.[a]

The Government initiated an electronic system that allows access to detailed data at all stages of the supply chain including types and quantities of stock, availability and locations of warehouses, distribution points and others.[b]

Retailers were provided maximum official fixed prices at which they could sell fresh food. Retailers not abiding to the guideline are subject to fines or closure as per the Consumer Protection Law No.8.[c]

The Government exempted food imports from customs duties.[d]

a Baladna, 2020.
b Food Navigator, 2020.
c IloveQatar, 2020.
d International Monetary Fund (IMF), 2020.

13 Ibid.
14 Atalayar, 2020.

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