



# Arab food security monitoring framework

Country reviews

**The Syrian Arab Republic**

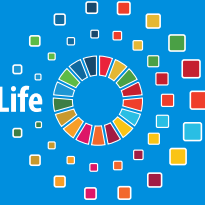


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# Arab food security monitoring framework

## Country reviews

### **The Syrian Arab Republic**



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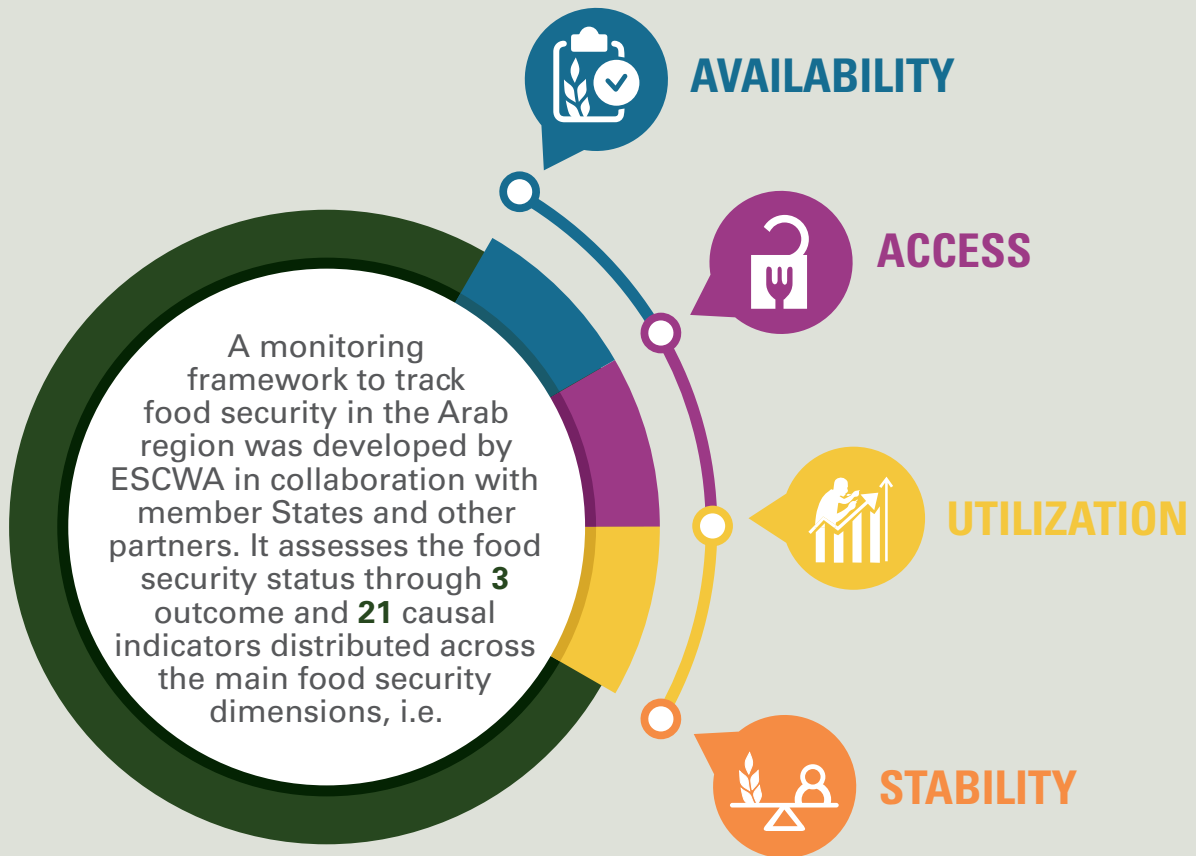


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## Key Messages



The monitoring framework shows that the food security situation in the Syrian Arab Republic is concerning, as both the food insecurity experience scale and obesity rates are high, with elevated rates of child stunting and wasting and anaemia among women. Sociopolitical stability is a concern. The country profile reviews the impact of COVID-19, early measures against it and their effect on the food situation.



**OBESITY**



**CHILD  
WASTING**



**ANAEMIA**



# Introduction

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and its partners developed the Arab Food Security Monitoring Framework that helps countries assess their food security situation despite its complex and multidimensional nature.<sup>1</sup> 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”<sup>2</sup> 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.

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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);

<b>1 Core Indicators (CO)</b>			
Code	Indicator description	Short name	SDG linkage
<b>C01</b>	Prevalence of undernourishment <sup>R</sup> %	Undernourishment	2.1.1
<b>C02</b>	Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity measured using FIES <sup>R</sup> %	Food insecurity	2.1.2
<b>C03</b>	Prevalence of obesity in the adult population (18 years and older) <sup>R</sup> %	Obesity	

<sup>R</sup> : 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;

<b>2 Food Availability Indicators (AV)</b>			
Code	Indicator description	Short name	SDG linkage
<b>AV1</b>	Primary wheat yield as a percentage of potential achievable yield - %	Yields	2.3.1
<b>AV2</b>	Agriculture Orientation index for government expenditures - Index	Agriculture expenditure	2.a.1
<b>AV3</b>	Food losses (% total food available) <sup>R</sup> %	Food loss	12.3
<b>AV4</b>	Average dietary energy supply adequacy - %	Dietary energy supply	
<b>AV5</b>	Wheat import dependency ratio <sup>R</sup> %	Import dependency	
<b>AV6</b>	Share of water resources used in agriculture out of total renewable water resources <sup>R</sup> %	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 <sup>R</sup> %	Poverty	1.1.1/1.2.1/1.2.2
AC2	Share of food consumption expenditure in total household consumption expenditure <sup>R</sup> %	Food consumption	
AC3	Unemployment rate <sup>R</sup> %	Unemployment	8.5.2
AC4	Logistics performance - index	Logistics	
AC5	Inflation, consumer prices <sup>R</sup> %	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 <sup>R</sup> %	Child stunting	2.2.1
UT4	Children under 5 years of age affected by wasting <sup>R</sup> %	Child wasting	2.2.2
UT5	Anaemia among women of reproductive age (15-49 years) <sup>R</sup> %	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 <sup>R</sup>	Climate change	
ST2	Food price anomalies standard deviation <sup>R</sup>	Price anomalies	2.c.1
ST3	Political stability and absence of violence - ranking	Political stability	
ST4	Per capita food production variability - \$1,000/capita <sup>R</sup>	Production variability	
ST5	Per capita food supply variability - kcal/capita/day <sup>R</sup>	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<sup>3</sup> under the title “Tracking Food Security in the Arab Region”<sup>4</sup>. 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<sup>5</sup> and Beirut<sup>6</sup> 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

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3 See [https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/tracking-food-security-arab-region-english\\_1.pdf](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](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>.



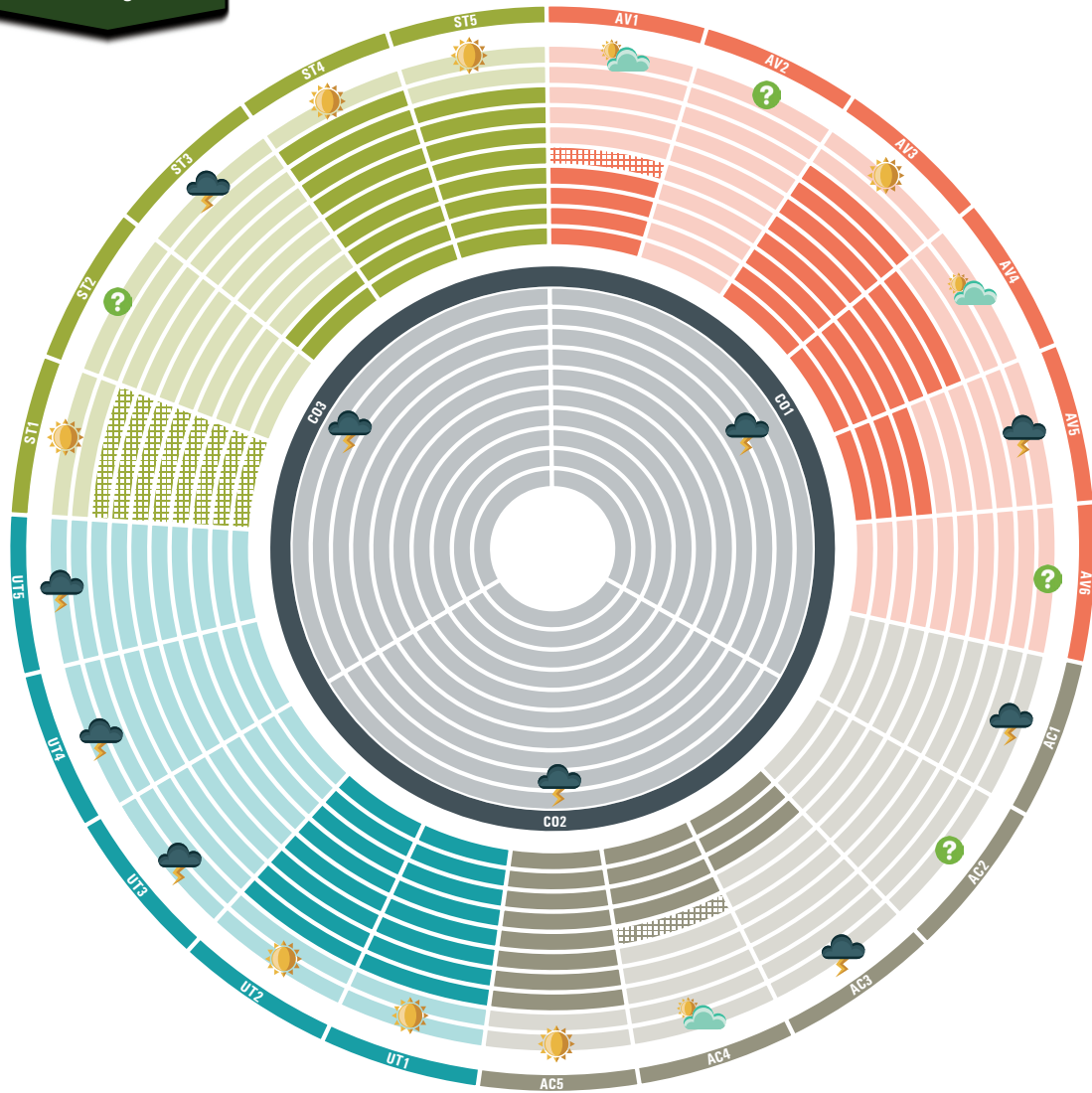
to follow up on progress achieved towards the implementation of selected SDGs. It should further enhance capacity at country level and support efforts of national experts to collect focused data, analyse them using a dedicated framework and interpret meaningfully the results to provide policymakers with 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			Trend
		Latest		2010	Latest		
Code	Description	Value	Year	Value	Value	Year	
<b>CORE INDICATORS</b>							
CO1	Undernourishment <sup>R</sup> %	10.8	2016	11.5	12.1	2016	●
CO2	Food insecurity <sup>R</sup> %	9.2	2018	n.a.	12.2	2016	
CO3	Obesity <sup>R</sup> %	13.0	2016	24.6	28.4	2016	●
<b>AVAILABILITY INDICATORS</b>							
AV1	Wheat yields - %	n.a.		76.5	82.2	2017	●
AV2	Agriculture expenditure - index	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
AV3	Food loss <sup>R</sup> %	n.a.		7.3	6.8	2013	●
AV4	Dietary energy supply - %	n.a.		131	131	2017	●
AV5	Wheat Import dependency <sup>R</sup> %	n.a.		62.5	65.0	2012	●
AV6	Agriculture water <sup>R</sup> %	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
<b>ACCESS INDICATORS</b>							
AC1	Poverty <sup>R</sup> %	26.2	2015	n.a.	16.6	mult.	
AC2	Food consumption <sup>R</sup> %	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
AC3	Unemployment <sup>R</sup> %	5.0	2018	9.6	10.4	mult.	●
AC4	Logistics - index	2.8	2016	2.6	2.7	2016	●
AC5	Inflation <sup>R</sup> %	2.5	2018	5.7	12.8	mult.	●
<b>UTILIZATION INDICATORS</b>							
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 <sup>R</sup> %	22.2	2017	n.a.	22.9	mult.	
UT4	Child wasting <sup>R</sup> %	7.5	2017	n.a.	8.7	mult.	
UT5	Women anaemia <sup>R</sup> %	32.8	2016	34.2	35.5	2016	●
<b>STABILITY INDICATORS</b>							
ST1	Climate change <sup>R</sup> - index	n.a.		n.a.	0.1	2019	
ST2	Price Anomalies <sup>R</sup> - index	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
ST3	Political stability - ranking	n.a.		20	14	2017	●
ST4	Production variability <sup>R</sup> - \$1,000/capita	n.a.		10.3	10.1	2016	●
ST5	Supply variability <sup>R</sup> - kcal/cap/day	n.a.		32.8	29.8	2013	●

<sup>R</sup> : 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

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Spanning over 187,437 km<sup>2</sup>, the Syrian Arab Republic has a series of mountain ranges in its east and some in the central part while the remaining country is mostly undulating plains most of which are desert. Its three main rivers are the Euphrates, Orontes and Yarmouk, and it has a few lakes.<sup>1</sup> The Syrian Arab Republic has vast areas of arable land (25 per cent of

the territory) and large steppe rangelands (Badia) extending over 45 per cent of the territory. Irrigated agriculture, mainly from the Euphrates irrigation projects (14,000 km<sup>2</sup>) and adjacent deep bore wells, coupled with extensive pastoralism formed the mainstay of the agricultural economy.<sup>2</sup>

### Box 1. Food security and conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic

A publication issued by the Syrian Center for Policy Research in May 2019 reported on the outcomes of an extensive study that looked at food security through the lens of the conflict. The study addressed the historical development of food security in the country and reviewed the status of the different dimensions of food security between the years 2010 and 2018, through primary data gleaned from interviews with 2,100 respondents across the country.

This unique effort unveiled a sad reality and confirmed the use of food as a weapon by all parties involved. The food security index dropped by 40 per cent between 2010 and 2018 due to the systematic decline in all components and drivers such as availability, stability and employment. The regions most affected were those of al Hasaka, Raqqa, Aleppo, Quneitra, Deir al Zour and Idlib.

**Source:** Syrian Center for Policy Research, 2019.

## B. Socioeconomy

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The Syrian Arab Republic, the heart of the Arab Mashreq (the Levant), has been devastated by a protracted war since 2011. More than 14 million people have been

displaced, including 6.2 million internally displaced people (IDPs), putting 11.7 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, of which 5 million are in acute need.

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<sup>1</sup> Hamide and others, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and Bundesanstalt für Geowissenschaften und Rohstoffe (BGR), 2013.



Various estimates place the gross domestic product (GDP) in the vicinity of \$50 billion and the purchasing power parity (PPP) per

capita GDP at \$3,000. The agriculture GDP is estimated at 20 per cent, and agriculture employs 17 per cent of the labour force.<sup>3</sup>

## C. Agriculture and food security

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Until the beginning of the war, the Syrian Arab Republic was a mainly agricultural nation and largely self-sufficient in its main staple, cereals, during most years, in spite of its dry climate and the frequent droughts it experiences. The Government provided large subsidies in agricultural inputs and food.

Today, approximately 80 per cent of people in the country live in poverty and food insecurity affects 7.9 million individuals, representing a 22 per cent increase between 2019 and early 2020.<sup>4</sup> Displacement continues to be the main driver of food insecurity, although open conflict has ceased in many regions. Damage to the agricultural

infrastructure has had its toll on cereal production and pastoralism, affecting people's livelihoods.

The country continues to be in need of humanitarian assistance to address food insecurity estimated to impact at least 11.7 million people, or 65 per cent of Syrian households.<sup>5</sup> The conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic has also negatively affected food trade in the entire region as, due to its strategic location, the country operated as a transportation hub between the Levant, on the one hand, and Iraq and the Gulf countries, on the other.

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<sup>3</sup> World Bank, n. d.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and World Health Organization (WHO), 2020.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Syria (OCHA-Syria), 2019.





## Data and trends

### A. Core indicators

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- **Prevalence of undernourishment (CO1)** official data are not available;
- **Prevalence of severe food insecurity (CO2)** was reported at 30 per cent in 2017, well above that of the Arab region (12.2 per cent);
- **Prevalence of obesity (CO3)** increased from 23.8 per cent in 2010 to 27.8 per cent in 2016 according to official national sources, slightly under the Arab regional average of 28.4 per cent. Adult obesity is more prevalent among women than among men, at 34.8 per cent and 20.9 per cent, respectively, in 2016.<sup>6</sup>

### B. Availability

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- **Wheat yield to potential (AV1)** as a share of potential yields was about 71 per cent in 2010 and 85 per cent in 2017, almost comparable to the Arab average of 82 per cent. The estimated potentially achievable yield in the Syrian Arab Republic is approximately 4 tons/ha as estimated by Mueller and others;<sup>7</sup>
- **Agriculture orientation index (AV2)** decreased from 8.1 in 2010 to 4.6 in 2015 according to the country's official sources, which indicates a strong support for the agricultural sector, though it is excessive given its contribution to overall GDP;
- **Food losses to food available (AV3)** official data are not available;
- **Average dietary energy supply adequacy (AV4)** stood at 134 per cent in 2010 and 2017, slightly higher than the Arab regional average of 131 per cent. Given the prevailing disruptions in food supply and distribution the value might be slightly high for the situation;
- **Wheat import dependency (AV5)** remained relatively low, between 32.7 per cent in 2010 and 35.3 per cent in 2016, despite the ongoing conflict;
- **Water resources used in agriculture (AV6)** official data are not available, though total renewable water resources are estimated at 822.7 m<sup>3</sup>/capita/year.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> World Bank, n. d.

<sup>7</sup> Mueller, N. D. and others, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), n. d.





## C. Access

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- **Poverty ratio at \$3.2/day (AC1)** official data were reported at 12 per cent in 2010 while later data are not available; the values might not be representative given the prevailing state of conflict in the country;
- **Food consumption share of expenditures (AC2)** data were not available for 2010 and was reported at 50 per cent in 2017. A great share of income is spent on food, which is concerning for food security; however, this could be due to the high inflation rates;
- **Unemployment rate (AC3)** official data were recorded at 8.6 per cent in 2010 and at 8.8 per cent in 2018; however,
- **Logistics performance (AC4)** dropped from 2.7 in 2010 to 1.6 in 2016, indicating potential bottlenecks and disruptions throughout the food supply chain;
- **Inflation, consumer prices (AC5)** was recorded at 38.5 per cent in 2015 compared to 4.4 per cent in 2010. This high inflation might be a result of the ongoing conflict and the increasing disruptions prevailing in the food supply chain.

## D. Utilization

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- **Population using basic drinking water services (UT1)** were at 96.4 per cent in 2010 and 99.7 per cent in 2017 though many people are displaced and the situation might not be correctly reflected; Organization (WHO) and is almost on par with the 2030 target set by the World Health Assembly (WHA);<sup>9</sup>
- **Population using basic sanitation services (UT2)** were at 92.9 per cent in 2010 and 99.9 per cent in 2017. The situation might not be reflected correctly due to the high prevalence of population displacement;
- **Stunting in children under five years (UT3)** increased from 10.3 per cent in 2010 to 12.7 per cent in 2016. This value is under the low severity of malnutrition according to the classification by the World Health
- **Wasting in children under five years (UT4)** was reported at 9.3 per cent in 2010 and at 2.2 per cent in 2016. The latest value is also under low severity of malnutrition on WHO's scale and is below the WHA's 2030 target;
- **Prevalence of anaemia among women (UT5)** was reported at 33.6 per cent in 2016, compared to 31.6 per cent in 2010. The latest value is slightly above the Arab regional average of 35.5 per cent, and above WHA's 2030 target.

## E. Stability

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- **Climate change vulnerability (ST1)** index is reported at 0.09, an indication that the country is not likely to be heavily impacted by weather-related disasters, sea-level rise or loss of agricultural productivity;

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<sup>9</sup> FAO and others, 2019.



- **Food price anomalies (ST2)** official data are not available; high and indicates big fluctuations and instability;
- **Political stability (ST3)** dropped from 22 in 2010 to 1 in 2017 due to the ongoing conflict;
- **Food production variability (ST4)** was recorded at \$31,200 in 2010 and dropped to \$23,700 in 2016. Even though this insinuates more stability in food production, the number is still extremely
- **Food supply variability (ST5)** increased from 41 kcal/capita/day in 2010 to 44 kcal/capita/day in 2013. Compared to the country's average dietary energy supply adequacy (ADESA), these values are extremely high and alarming but are probably a result of the ongoing conflict.



# Food security dashboard

Syrian Arab Republic



2010 Data: [Dark Grey] [Red] [Grey] [Blue] [Green]    Latest Data: [Grid 1] [Grid 2] [Grid 3] [Grid 4] [Grid 5]

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



## Food security indicators, Syrian Arab Republic

Indicators		Arab		Syrian Arab Republic			Trend
		Latest		2010	Latest		
Code	Description	Value	Year	Value	Value	Year	
<b>CORE INDICATORS</b>							
CO1	Undernourishment <sup>R</sup> %	12.1	2016	n.a.	n.a.		
CO2	Food insecurity <sup>R</sup> %	12.2	2016	n.a.	30.0	2017	
CO3	Obesity <sup>R</sup> %	28.4	2016	23.8	27.8	2016	●
<b>AVAILABILITY INDICATORS</b>							
AV1	Wheat yields - %	82.2	2017	71.4	85.2	2019	●
AV2	Agriculture expenditure - index	n.a.		8.10	4.60	2015	●
AV3	Food loss <sup>R</sup> %	6.8	2013	n.a.	n.a.		
AV4	Dietary energy supply - %	131	2017	134	134	2017	●
AV5	Wheat Import dependency <sup>R</sup> %	65.0	2012	32.7	35.3	2016	●
AV6	Agriculture water <sup>R</sup> %	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
<b>ACCESS INDICATORS</b>							
AC1	Poverty <sup>R</sup> %	16.6	mult.	12.0	n.a.		
AC2	Food consumption <sup>R</sup> %	n.a.		n.a.	50.0	2017	
AC3	Unemployment <sup>R</sup> %	10.4	mult.	8.6	8.8	2018	●
AC4	Logistics - index	2.7	2016	2.7	1.6	2016	●
AC5	Inflation <sup>R</sup> %	12.8	mult.	4.4	38.5	2015	●
<b>UTILIZATION INDICATORS</b>							
UT1	Drinking water access - %	86.9	2015	96.4	99.7	2017	●
UT2	Sanitation access - %	80.8	2015	92.9	99.9	2017	●
UT3	Child stunting <sup>R</sup> %	22.9	mult.	10.3	12.7	2016	●
UT4	Child wasting <sup>R</sup> %	8.7	mult.	9.3	2.2	2016	●
UT5	Women anaemia <sup>R</sup> %	35.5	2016	31.6	33.6	2016	●
<b>STABILITY INDICATORS</b>							
ST1	Climate change <sup>R</sup> - index	0.1	2019	n.a.	0.09	2019	
ST2	Price Anomalies <sup>R</sup> - index	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
ST3	Political stability - ranking	14	2017	22	1	2017	●
ST4	Production variability <sup>R</sup> - \$1,000/capita	10.1	2016	31.2	23.7	2016	●
ST5	Supply variability <sup>R</sup> - kcal/cap/day	29.8	2013	41.0	44.0	2016	●

<sup>R</sup> : 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 graph are from national sources.





# Food security snapshot

## A. Drivers and determinants

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The framework shows that the food security situation in the Syrian Arab Republic is concerning, which is in line with reports from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).<sup>10</sup> Undernourishment (CO1) has no data while both food insecurity experience (CO2) and obesity (CO3) are alarming.

### Hotspot areas include the following:

- **Availability:** agriculture orientation (AV2);
- **Utilization:** stunting (UT3) and wasting (UT4) in children and anaemia in women (UT5);
- **Stability:** political stability (ST3).

As with all countries in conflict, the limits of the current monitoring framework are perceptible. Food insecurity caused by the conflict and exacerbated by climatic conditions continue to pose a definite threat on people and livelihoods. Physical and economic access to food has been curtailed, and high inflation rates and a low logistical capacity index are essentially by-products of the war. Instability is also evident from the high values of food supply and production variability, which indicate that, in some instances, people might have been receiving less than 100 per cent of their average dietary energy needs, which leads to malnutrition.

## B. Action areas

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The lack of data poses a serious challenge for monitoring the impact of the current food security situation in the country. It is, therefore, difficult to recommend policies apart from the immediate cessation of conflict and the initiation of social and physical reconstruction efforts. Until then, the Syrian Arab Republic will remain dependent on humanitarian aid for its food security. However, post-conflict

situations can offer a space for the initiation of new measures. Among these, are the following recommendations:

1. Regain cereal self-sufficiency based on supplemental irrigation and the enhancement of the use of green water;
2. Strengthen agropastoral livelihoods, especially in the Badia, the Syrian

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<sup>10</sup> OCHA-Syria, 2019.



- steppe, through livestock amelioration programmes coupled with poverty alleviation initiatives;
3. Improve communications between the different regions and between the Syrian Arab Republic and neighbouring countries in order to enhance trade logistics;
  4. Ensure that the role of women in the labour force is fully expressed in decent employment;
  5. Continue to work with agencies to address malnutrition and nutritional imbalances caused by the conflict.

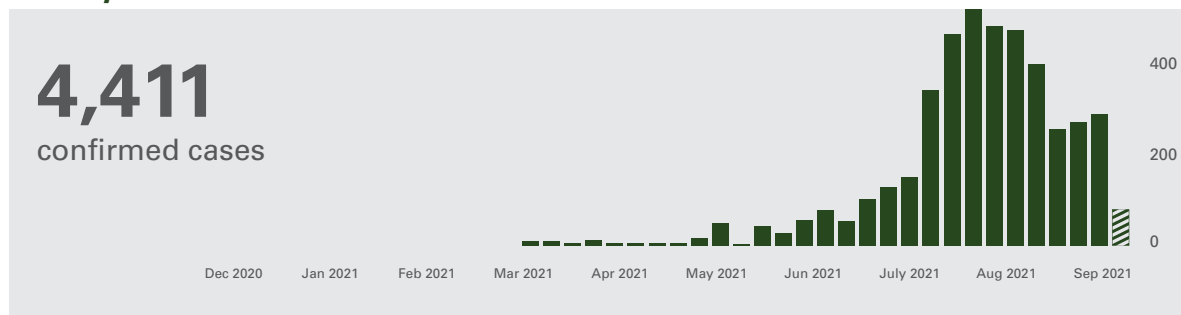


# Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic reached the Syrian Arab Republic in late March 2020 and, by October, had affected more than 4,400 people with more than 200 deaths.

The country has largely recorded daily occurrences of COVID-19 below 100, with the bulk of cases happening between the beginning of August and mid-September.

## Weekly cases



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

In April, WFP reported that 9.3 million individuals were food insecure, with 1.4 million people pushed into food insecurity in a period of six months and an additional 2 million people at risk of food insecurity. Out of the food-insecure population, 87 per cent have no savings, and a total of 4.6 million breastfeeding mothers and their children

require nutritional support, with 3.7 million acute cases.<sup>11</sup>

Lockdown measures<sup>12</sup> exacerbated livelihood challenges caused by the nine years of conflict and led to livelihood losses. The measures led to the closure of restaurants and shops and affected the livelihood of

<sup>11</sup> Union of Medical Care and Relief Organizations (UOSSM), 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Suspension of schools and universities, both public and private; sports activities; religious institutes; public and private (weddings, engagement parties and others), cultural and religious events; and publication of printed newspapers. Authorities postponed the parliamentary elections. Dining restaurants, café, bazaars, wedding and mourning halls and tents were closed. Curfew was declared from 6:00 p.m. – 6:00 a.m.



1.2 million farmers.<sup>13</sup> Import difficulties and movement restrictions increased the price of agricultural input and animal feed and negatively affected local production, poultry businesses, small livestock owners, and food availability (FAO, 2020). For example, the price of pesticides doubled in Hama, the price of a tomato seeds pack increased by \$6.00, and the restaurants demand for meat decreased.<sup>14</sup>

Lockdown measures and the closure of schools led to the suspension of school feeding programmes operated by WFP to assist more than one million children.<sup>15</sup>

Shortage of bread and inconsistency in its quality has been witnessed across Syrian governorates, especially in camps of IDPs who lack access to bakeries. For example, in Rif Dimashq and Damascus, the price of the subsidized bread bundle sold for \$0.077, while the unsubsidized bread bundle was sold at \$0.541.<sup>16</sup>

Local production of wheat is estimated to be between 2.1 and 2.4 million tons based on interviews with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) representatives, which is much lower than pre-conflict levels.<sup>17</sup> Of all wheat-producing land, 70 per cent is in the hands of Kurdish forces, who are aiming to store enough wheat for 18 months and sell the rest, if any remains, to the

Government. The economic crisis and the decrease in the value of the Syrian pound against the dollar is compromising the ability of the Government to buy local wheat to compensate for the decrease in imports and stocks.<sup>18</sup>

COVID-19 induced panic buying, which, together with the Lebanese financial crisis, led to increased food prices in the Syrian Arab Republic. The average nation-wide cost of a food basket increased by 16 per cent from March to April (111 per cent year-on-year in April).<sup>19</sup> This was followed by an 11 per cent increase from April to May (15.8 times higher than the five-years pre-crisis average; 133 per cent year-on-year increase) and a 48 per cent increase from May to June (240 per cent year-on-year increase). Prices stabilized in July but are still 23.5 times higher than those of the five-years pre-crisis average and two times higher than those of the 2016 crisis.<sup>20</sup>

Due to fund shortages, and as of April, WFP had to reduce caloric value of the food in the General Food Assistance distributed in the north-western part of the Syrian Arab Republic.<sup>21</sup> WFP needs \$300 million to continue working until January 2021; if this amount cannot be secured by August, further reductions in food rations and number of beneficiaries will have to be applied as of October.<sup>22</sup>

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13 World Food Programme (WFP), 2020a.

14 FAO, 2020.

15 WFP, 2020b.

16 Enab Baladi, 2020.

17 Reuters, 2020.

18 Ibid.

19 Arab Weekly, 2020. al-Awsat, 2020.

20 WFP, 2020b; and UOSSM, 2020.

21 FAO, 2020; and WFP, 2020b.

22 WFP, 2020c.





## Box 2. Examples of initiatives

### ***Government-led***

To ensure sufficient good-quality bread, the Syrian Government took the following measures:<sup>a</sup>

- Supported distributors to use “mobile bakery” cars to distribute bread to local residents in all areas, under the supervision of administrative units;
- Created a technical committee to investigate the reasons of reduced bread quality and frame new guidelines with approved quality standards to be met by bakeries;
- Decided to repair the inactive grain silos;
- Agreed to give financial support for repairing the production lines of the “Syrian Bakeries Institution” aiming at maximum working ability;
- Created a rewarding system to improve the output of bakery workers and decided to help in labour shortages;
- Bought wheat from farmers at the increased price of \$0.154 per kilo for hard and soft wheat for the 2019-2020 harvest season;
- Granted farmers an on-time delivery reward of \$0.019 per kilo (price of one kilo to \$0.174);
- Provided facilities to bakeries, private silos and importers to import wheat and flour aiming at increasing local availability.

As of April 29, the Government eased travel restrictions within governorates to allow the movement of providers of humanitarian aid.<sup>b</sup>

### ***Other initiatives***

Germany donated EUR 130 million to WFP to provide humanitarian assistance to 4.8 million people.<sup>c</sup>

Japan donated \$3.2 million to WFP, of which \$1.8 million were allocated to repairing water services for 67,000 farmers enabling them to plant their crops and the remaining \$1.4 million dedicated to providing food assistance to 460,000 individuals aiming at improving their food security and ensuring resilience.<sup>d</sup>

To guarantee availability of assistance in the north-western part of the Syrian Arab Republic, WFP stocked sufficient food for two months.<sup>e</sup>

WFP, in collaboration with WHO, started an institutional feeding project distributing food for vulnerable people in quarantine centres for a period of six months.<sup>f</sup>

FAO initiated the “low tunnels vegetable seedlings project” in March aiming at locally producing seedlings and repairing/establishing efficient irrigation systems. The project has a time frame of one year and is likely to benefit 700 farmers directly and 7,000 farmers indirectly.<sup>g</sup>

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a Enab Baladi, 2020.

b World Food Programme (WFP), 2020d.

c WFP, 2020e.

d WFP, 2020f.

e WFP, 2020g.

f WFP, 2020d.

g FAO, 2020.





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