Arab food security monitoring framework

Country reviews

Yemen

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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

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Key Messages

The monitoring framework shows that Yemen has high rates of undernourishment and obesity as well as anaemia among women, meaning the country is confronting the triple burden of malnutrition. Dependency on food imports is high, which in combination with the ongoing sociopolitical crisis weakens its food security situation. 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.

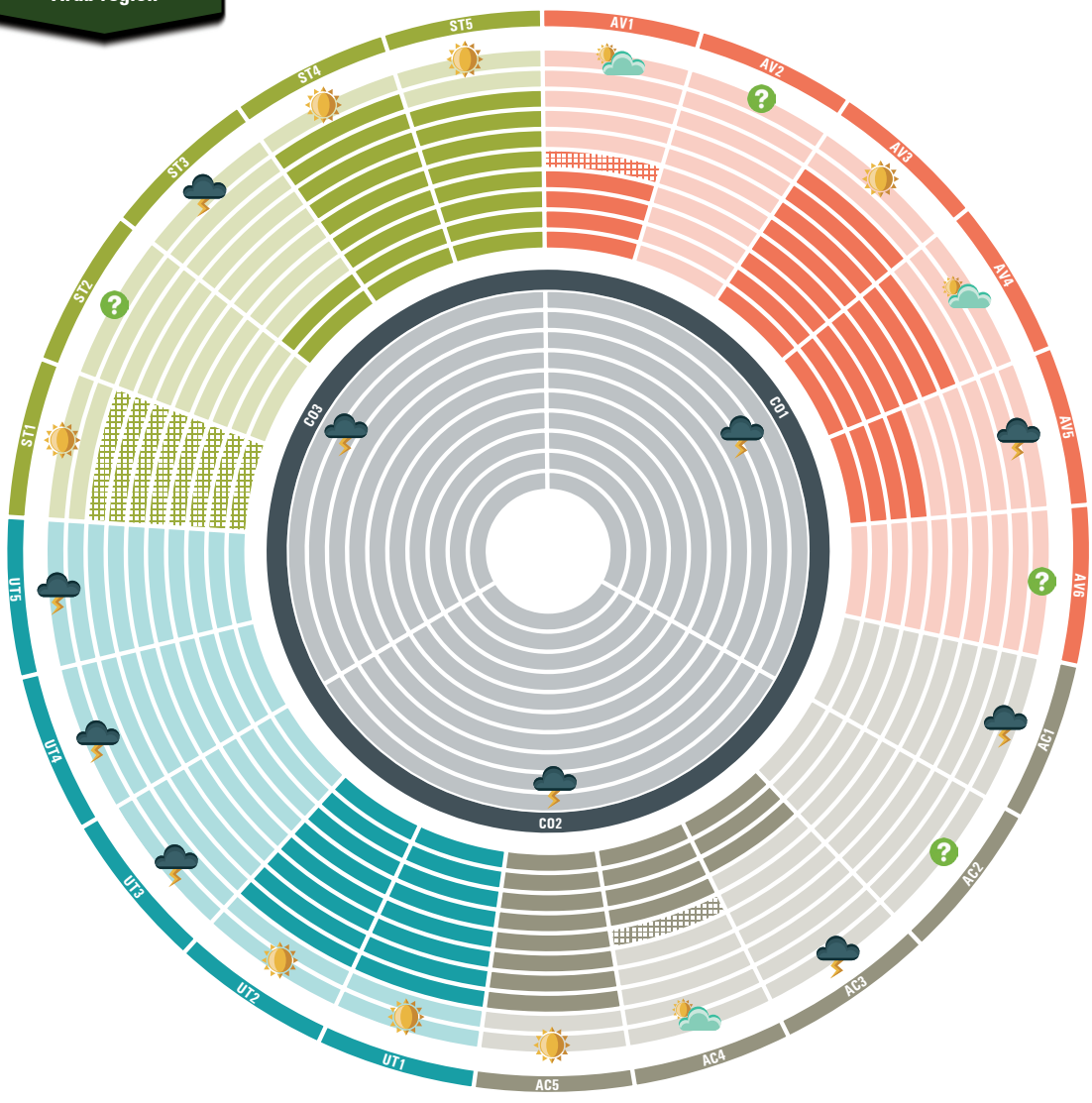
6 See https://www.unescwa.org/events/training2-food-security-monitoring-framework-arab.

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

Yemen, with an area of 528,000 km^2, is mostly a mountainous country at the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula. The narrow Tihama coastal plain is largely agricultural, as are the subtropical wadis that dissect the vast mountain range. An elevated plain flows towards the interior's elevated desert.[1]

Box 1. Qat, food, water and war

Yemen is a country with great agricultural potential, and agriculture is still the largest employer, especially of women. In a country that is experiencing a near-famine situation, it is justified to ask why local production is not catering for some of the people's needs.

Qat (catha edulis) is a mild stimulant, the leaves of which are traditionally chewed by both men and women (and a large proportion of children under 12 according to the World Health Organization (WHO) in order to procure a euphoric feeling.[a] While it is estimated that food production has declined by an estimated 38 per cent since the beginning of the recent conflict, reports also indicate that the cultivation and use of qat have increased. As an irrigated crop, qat contributes to the decline in the levels of water tables as the crop, as estimated by the Ministry of Agriculture, uses one third of irrigation water.[b] It is also a cause of the degradation of the health status of the population as many households will compromise on the quality of food to purchase qat.[c]

So why do people prefer growing qat to growing food? The qat tradition is deeply entrenched in the Yemeni culture and promotes social interaction. During the war, it acts as an escape mechanism. In addition, no crop can compete with qat economically, as its trade is estimated at millions per year.[d]

a World Health Organization (WHO), 2008.
b Fanack.com, 2020.
c Ibid.
d Ibid.

1 Wenner and others, 2020.

B. Socioeconomy

Since 2011, Yemen has been in conflict. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is about $950 for a total GDP of $27 billion.[2] Agriculture is traditionally important and takes place on 44 per cent of the land and accounts for 20 per cent of GDP while oil accounts for 25 per cent. Agriculture employs 45 per cent of the workforce, and accounts for 66 per cent of women's employment. Yet, Yemen relies heavily on food import to satisfy its food needs. As with famines elsewhere, food shortages are due to a loss of entitlements rather than to the unavailability of food.[3]

Its population of nearly 30 million is mostly young, with 40 per cent under 14 years of age. It is still largely rural (63 per cent) in spite of a rapid urbanization. Yemen is also home to 3,650,000 Internally Displaced Peoples equally divided between men, women, girls and boys, in addition to 280,000 refugees from Somalia and Ethiopia.[4]

C. Agriculture and food security

Yemen is experiencing the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, with 24 million out of its 30 million inhabitants in need of humanitarian assistance and 20 million facing food insecurity and hunger, including 10 million on the brink of famine.[5]

According to FAO, 238,000 people are in Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) 5 (famine) and risk joining the 65,000 people who are currently experiencing extreme stages of hunger if food assistance is slightly disrupted.[6]

2 World Bank, n. d.
3 World Food Programme (WFP), 2018.
4 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2019.
5 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2020a.
6 Ibid.

Data and trends

A. Core indicators

- **Prevalence of undernourishment (CO1)** increased from 25.7 per cent in 2010 to 34.4 per cent in 2016, more than double the average of the Arab region (12.1 per cent), most probably due to the prevailing war situation;
- **Prevalence of severe food insecurity (CO2)** official data are not available;
- **Prevalence of adult obesity (CO3)** also increased from 13.5 per cent to 17.1 per cent between 2010 and 2013. It is more pronounced among women (22 per cent) than it is among men (12 per cent).[7] However, these values are much lower than the average of the Arab region (28.4 per cent).

B. Availability

- **Wheat yield to potential (AV1)** decreased between 2010 and 2017 from 45 per cent to 40 per cent. Wheat yield stood at 1.56 tons/ha as reported by official sources in the country, while the estimated potential is 3.93 tons/ha;[8]
- **Agricultural orientation index (AV2)** data show that the Government invested more in agriculture in 2018 compared to 2010, as the index increased from 0.89 to 2.26, denoting an increased focus;
- **Food losses to food available (AV3)** are low and were recorded at around 5 per cent in 2013 though data might not be complete;
- **Average dietary energy supply adequacy (AV4)** stood at 91 per cent in 2012, indicating that part of the population might not be getting adequate amounts of food. This value is extremely low compared to the Arab regional average of 131 per cent;
- **Wheat import dependency (AV5)** data show that the country relies almost entirely on food imports with a dependency of 95.3 per cent in 2012;
- **Water resources used in agriculture (AV6)** data are not available; though, the country's total renewable water resources are 74.34 m^3/capita/year,[9] which is below the water scarcity threshold.

7 World Bank, n. d.
8 Mueller, N. D. and others, 2012.
9 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), n. d.

C. Access

- **Poverty ratio at $3.2/day (AC1)** affected more than half the population (52.2 per cent) in 2014. This is a challenge that hinders people's economic access to food;
- **Food consumption share of expenditures (AC2)** data are not available;
- **Unemployment rate (AC3)** levels reached 67 per cent in 2017, which is staggering but anticipated given the prevailing conflicts;
- **Logistics performance (AC4)** official data are not available;
- **Inflation, consumer prices (AC5)** is substantially high, at 24 per cent in 2017. This is related to the war and the siege imposed on the country.

D. Utilization

- **Population using basic drinking water services (UT1)** was reported at only 63.5 per cent in 2017, which, however, was an improvement from 54 per cent in 2010. The country needs to invest more if it wants to meet the related 2030 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target;
- **Population using basic sanitation services (UT2)** was at 53 per cent in 2010 and 59.1 per cent in 2017, well below the Arab average of 81 per cent;
- **Stunting in children under five years (UT3)** was reported at 46.5 per cent in 2013, well above the Arab average of about 23 per cent, the classification by WHO for "very high" prevalence of malnutrition and the targets that were set for 2030 by the World Health Assembly (WHA).[10] The ongoing war is exerting an enormous pressure on food security among children;
- **Wasting in children under five years (UT4)** was recorded at 16.3 per cent. The value surpasses the Arab region's average of 8.7 per cent, WHO classification for "very high" prevalence of malnutrition and the targets that were set for 2030 by WHA;[11]
- **Prevalence of anaemia among women (UT5)** is also alarmingly high in the country, at 69.6 per cent in 2016. It is the highest in the entire Arab region and is more than triple the target set for 2030 by WHA.

E. Stability

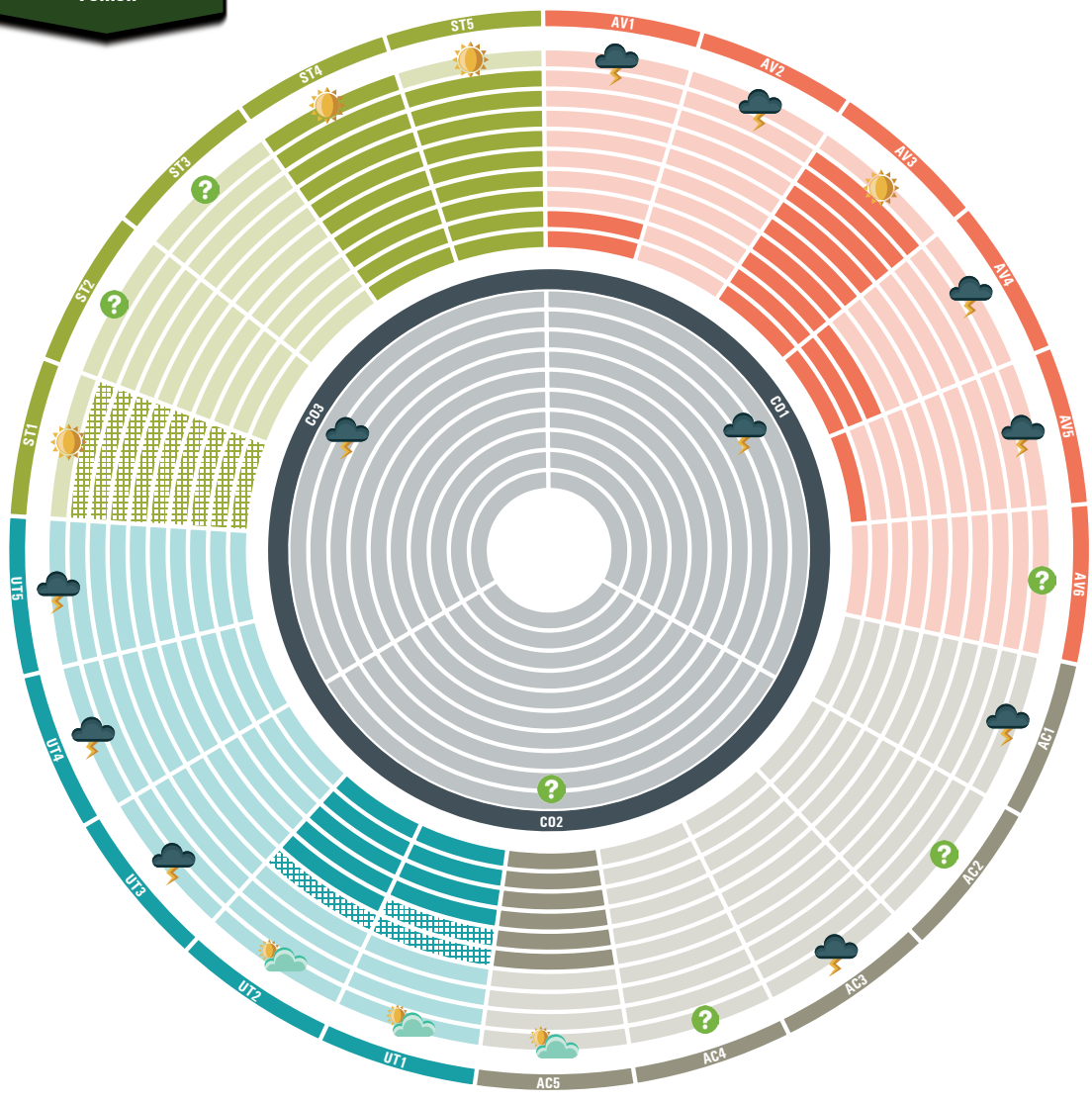
- **Climate change vulnerability (ST1)** does not seem to affect the country much as it only scores 0.04 according to international data. But this is noting that the used index only accounts for the increase in weather-related disasters, sea-level rise and the loss of agricultural productivity;

10 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), n. d.
11 FAO and others, 2019.

- **Food price anomalies (ST2)** data are not available;
- **Political stability (ST3)** official data are not available;
- **Food production variability (ST4)** was almost stable between 2010 and 2016 at $2,500 and $3,000 per capita, respectively. However, the low level could be due to the low production caused by the war;
- **Food supply variability (ST5)** witnessed a shy decrease from 16 to 13 kcal/capita/day. However, given the country's already problematic calorie deficiency along with the challenging access to and availability of food, these values are worrying.

Food security dashboard

Yemen



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Food security indicators, Yemen

Indicators		Arab		Yemen			
		Latest		2010	Latest		Trend
Code	Description	Value	Year	Value	Value	Year	
CORE INDICATORS							
CO1	Undernourishment (R) %	12.1	2016	25.7	34.4	2016	🔴
CO2	Food insecurity (R) %	12.2	2016	n.a.	n.a.		
CO3	Obesity (R) %	28.4	2016	13.5	17.1	2016	🔴
AVAILABILITY INDICATORS							
AV1	Wheat yields - %	82.2	2017	45.4	39.7	2017	🔴
AV2	Agriculture expenditure - index	n.a.		0.89	2.26	2018	🟢
AV3	Food loss (R) %	6.8	2013	3.2	4.3	2013	🔴
AV4	Dietary energy supply - %	131	2017	102	91	2017	🔴
AV5	Wheat Import dependency (R) %	65.0	2012	87.7	95.3	2012	🔴
AV6	Agriculture water (R) %	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
ACCESS INDICATORS							
AC1	Poverty (R) %	16.6	mult.	n.a.	52.2	2014	
AC2	Food consumption (R) %	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
AC3	Unemployment (R) %	10.4	mult.	67.5	67.0	2017	🟡
AC4	Logistics - index	2.7	2016	n.a.	n.a.		
AC5	Inflation (R) %	12.8	mult.	8.7	24.0	2017	🔴
UTILIZATION INDICATORS							
UT1	Drinking water access - %	86.9	2015	54.0	63.5	2017	🟢
UT2	Sanitation access - %	80.8	2015	52.9	59.1	2017	🟢
UT3	Child stunting (R) %	22.9	mult.	n.a.	46.5	2013	
UT4	Child wasting (R) %	8.7	mult.	n.a.	16.3	2013	
UT5	Women anaemia (R) %	35.5	2016	63.3	69.6	2016	🔴
STABILITY INDICATORS							
ST1	Climate change (R) - index	0.1	2019	n.a.	0.04	2019	
ST2	Price Anomalies (R) - index	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
ST3	Political stability - ranking	14	2017	n.a.	n.a.		
ST4	Production variability (R) - $1,000/capita	10.1	2016	2.5	3.0	2016	🔴
ST5	Supply variability (R) - kcal/cap/day	29.8	2013	16.0	13.0	2013	🟢

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

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

Disclaimer: Unless otherwise indicated, all data in the table are from national sources.

Food security snapshot

A. Drivers and determinants

The framework shows that the food security situation in Yemen is worrying as undernourishment (CO1) and obesity (CO3) levels are alarming while food insecurity experience (CO2) lacks data.

Hotspot areas include the following:

- **Availability:** wheat yields (AV1), agriculture orientation (AV2), the average dietary energy supply adequacy (AV4) and import dependency (AV5);
- **Access:** poverty (AC1) and unemployment (AC3);
- **Utilization:** stunting (UT3) and wasting (UT4) among children and anaemia in women (UT5).

As with other conflict-affected countries, the framework's output provides only a partial image as it seeks to help address causes of chronic food insecurity rather than crisis-driven food insecurity. The first priority is for the immediate cessation of the conflict, as the World Bank estimated that economic growth would have been in double digits in 2019 if violence had stopped in mid-2018.

B. Action areas

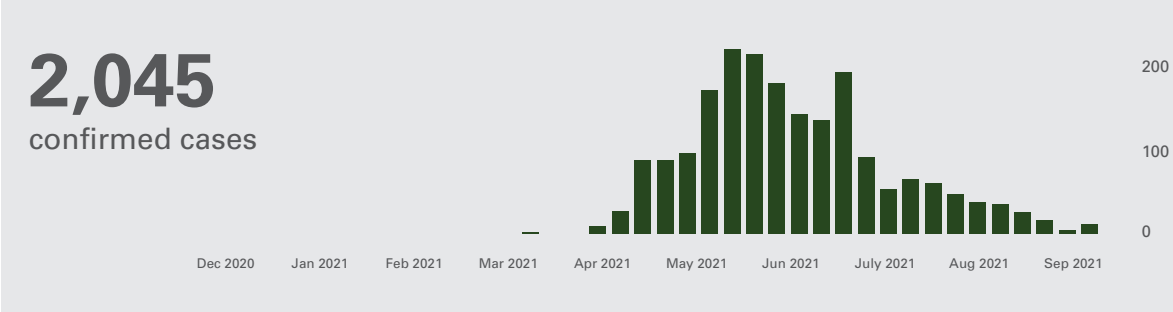
A set of strategic priorities is emerging, however, that can serve as a basis for policymaking. These priorities include the following:

1. Enhancing the nutritional status of the most vulnerable population, especially women and children, through in-kind and cash transfers to women. For this to work, humanitarian aid must be facilitated by parties in conflict and international organizations be given sufficient latitude to operate freely.
2. Focus on water and sanitation infrastructure, especially in remote rural areas.
3. Increase participation of women in the labour force as a key to revitalizing the economy and lowering poverty rates.
4. Equip vulnerable households across Yemen with equitable social safety nets and basic services.
5. Enhance the productivity of small and medium-sized farmers and encourage the growing of food as a replacement to qat production.

Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic reached Yemen in early April 2020 and, by October, had affected more than 2,000 people, with around 600 deaths recorded. Most often, Yemen records less than 50 daily occurrences of COVID-19, though it has witnessed a succession of small peaks with the last occurring around mid-July.

Weekly cases



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

Prior to the pandemic and according to the latest IPC report, 2 million people, 25 per cent of the total 7.9 million analysed, were classified as highly food insecure during February-April 2020.[12] This number is expected to increase due to the lockdown measures, floods, locust invasions and a deteriorating economy, which are negatively impacting people's lives and livelihoods, pushing an additional 1.2 million individuals (40 per cent) into food insecurity (IPC phase 3 and above) in the second half of 2020 if humanitarian assistance continues at the same level and scale. In March, it was reported that more than 230 out of 333 Yemeni districts are food insecure, out of which 103 districts are at risk of famine, 41 districts have malnutrition rates above 15 per cent, 54 districts have acute water, sanitation and hygiene deficits, and 46 districts are at high risk of cholera.[13]

Worldwide and local lockdown measures[14] disrupted global and local supply chains

12 FAO, 2020b.
13 OCHA, 2020a.
14 Closure of dining-in venues, public and private gathering venues; suspension of social and religious events; and suspension of international flights.

causing shortage in food availability and disrupting access. Yemen imports 90 per cent of its food need[15] and, compared to last year, imports recorded a 12 per cent, 43 per cent and 39 per cent decrease in February, March and April, respectively, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.[16]

Locally, lockdown measures, together with locust invasions and fuel shortages, led to disruption in agricultural activities,[17] food availability, supply chains and food distribution.[18] By July 23, 2020, fuel shortages and high fuel prices hindered further food supply and food distribution, notably in flood-affected regions.[19]

The decrease in the value of the Yemeni dinar against the US dollar and the huge dependency of Yemen on food imports led to an increase in food prices. The price of the minimum food basket increased by 8 per cent compared to the pre-COVID period and increased in different percentages across various governorates recording its highest increase, namely, by 35 per cent and 27 per cent in the Aden and Lahj governorates, respectively.[20] Food prices are expected to further increase in September.[21] The decrease in global oil prices led to a 60-70 per cent decrease in the remittances sent by Yemenis living abroad, mainly those sent from Saudi Arabia,[22] causing an 80 per cent decrease in the incomes of households dependent on remittances, pushing them into poverty.[23] Lockdown measures led to income losses as businesses had to shut down or permanently close. All these factors contributed to the decrease in the purchasing power of Yemenis who depend on their livelihoods to secure their needs.[24]

15 Including 95 per cent of its wheat and 100 per cent of its rice (OCHA, 2020a).
16 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2020; and OCHA, 2020b.
17 Damaged crops, livestock pastures and beehives, in addition to disrupted fishing activities.
18 FEWSNET, 2020.
19 OCHA, 2020c.
20 OCHA, 2020d; and UNICEF, 2020.
21 FEWSNET, 2020.
22 Saudi Arabia has the highest number of expatriate workers, and 90 per cent of remittances come from the Gulf region.
23 OCHA, 2020d; and UNICEF, 2020.
24 FEWSNET, 2020; and OCHA, 2020d.

Box 2. Examples of initiatives

During April-June 2020, WFP distributed general food assistance packages and treated and prevented moderate acute malnutrition in children and pregnant and lactating women through the Targeted Supplementary Feeding Programme (TSFP) and the Blanket Supplementary Feeding Programme (BSFP).[a]

WFP also assisted local communities as follows:

- Distributing food to 8.6 million people in April and 8.8 million in May;[b]
- Providing food packages through the rapid response mechanism (RRM) to 9,080 people in quarantine centres in nine governorates in April;[c]
- Assisting 169,876 individuals in April, and 139,937 individuals in June through food assistance for assets (FFA) and/or food assistance for training (FFT) programmes;[d]
- Distributing food to 958,121 students in April by readapting school feeding programmes into take-home distributions.[e]

a World Food Programme (WFP), 2020a.
b Ibid.
c Ibid.
d WFP, 2020b.
e WFP, 2020a.

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