

Yemen Food Security Information System (FSIS) Development Programme

The FSIS Programme is Funded by the European Union and Implemented by FAO and the Food Security Technical Secretariat/MoPIC

YEMEN FOOD SECURITY UPDATE

June 2017

Agriculture livelihoods under stress and threaten further deterioration of food security

Key Messages

- Ninety-five, (95) districts countrywide are prioritized by Food Security and Nutrition clusters for immediate humanitarian assistance to save lives and protect livelihoods.
- Out of 17 million food insecure population, 8 million are targeted for monthly emergency food assistance (EFA) (General Food Assistance and Cash Voucher), 3.3M emergency livelihoods assistance and 200,000 thousand for livelihood restoration. Only 46% are reached on average per month since January 2017 for EFA, 11% are reached so far for emergency livelihoods assistance and 39% reached for livelihood restoration.
- Acute food insecurity is expected to deteriorate further, if no immediate funding and scale up of emergency food and livelihood assistance programs. High-risk famine areas as identified during March 2017 IPC analysis require continuous support and monitoring.
- Fishermen in coastal areas of Hajjah, Taiz, and Southern Hodeida have totally stopped fishing and majority have already lost their livelihood opportunities in fishing sector.
- The poultry sector is on verge of disintegrating. Taking into consideration the high investment in this sector, its collapse will affect livelihoods of considerable population in the country.
- The economic crisis and institutional structural problems continues to affect the most crucial services such as agriculture extension, domestic and transboundary livestock diseases surveillances.
- An estimated 1,611,428.00 MT of various food items were imported during the period January – April 2017, out of which 67% is wheat grains and less than 5% is wheat flour. Al Hodeidah port shared 57% (911,862.00 MT) of the total import. Compared to the previous years (2014 – 2016), the imported wheat grains during same period is less by 25%.
- Estimated 2.3M children under the age of five are acutely malnourished and face an increased risk of morbidity and death.¹
- Civil servants for the 9th month in a row are without regular salary payments affecting their purchasing power.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

28 Million	Total Yemen Population
17 Million	Food insecure population that require emergency humanitarian assistance
Over 60%	of Yemeni population depend on agriculture livelihoods
11%	of the agriculture households are female-headed
40%	agricultural production reduced at national level in 2016
74%	of the rural communities relay on the market for food and nonfood commodities
25-30%	of annual food commodity requirement is from local production
2.3 Million	of children under five years are currently acutely Malnourished
<i>Source: EFSNA 2016, YHRP 2017, FSAC and Nutrition cluster and CSO.</i>	

¹ Nutrition Cluster malnutrition caseload estimations in May 2017



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Current Food Security Situation

Nationally, Yemen food security situation remains precarious as was projected in March 2017 IPC analysis results. The main food insecurity drivers are still present and continue to affect negatively food security situation countrywide. The food insecure population is most likely to have increased marginally beyond 17 million as estimated within period March to July 2017². The national level assumptions used to develop Yemen IPC March 2017 most likely scenario for the period remains unchanged except the following assumptions that have been revised; 1) the importation of food and non-food items through Al Hodeida sea port was projected to most likely slow down due to escalation of conflict limiting the commercial and humanitarian imports. This has so far remained stable and newest information regarding the Hodeida seaport imports shows likelihood to remain the same until the end of scenario period. 2) Given the delayed and below-average rains in April and May, the key months of rainfall during the first cropping season. The total cumulative rainfall is likely to be below average than previously forecasted and will have potential impact the harvest and overall food security situation.

There is general decline in food availability across most markets, which is attributable to reduced imports and economic crisis facing the entire country. At the same time, household demand for food from markets has increased and more so during ongoing holy month of Ramadan festivities. As a result, food commodity prices have raised as demand outstrips supply as reported from monthly FSIS/FSTS market bulletins since April 2017. Lack of disposable income by most of vulnerable households and particularly from civil servants whose payment was irregular for the past 9 months in a row is worsening their purchasing power. Unpredictable business environment, continued decline of the Yemeni Rial against US dollar, limited job opportunities, near collapse of the poultry and fishing livelihood sectors and lack of foreseeable solution to ongoing crisis further diminishes the prospects of food security stability in near future.

1. Main Food insecurity contributing factors

1.1 Acute/ongoing events

In late March 2017, the government of Yemen issued an alert on outbreak of cholera in most of the governorates with the capital Sanaa City having the highest suspected cases of cholera. As of 2nd June 2017, situation report on cholera outbreak (from 27 April to 2 June 2017), 82,307 suspected cholera cases were reported from 19 governorates. Out of the total reported cases, 651 deaths were reported (0.8% case fatality rate)³. In addition, according to Yemen Nutrition cluster and Ministry of Public Health and Population (MoPHP), currently out of 22 governorates of Yemen, an estimated 2.3 million children under the age of five are acutely malnourished and face an increased risk of morbidity and death similarly 536,360 pregnant and lactating women are acutely moderately malnourished⁴. This number has increased by 9% since March 2017. As a result, major attention to address acute malnutrition within these particular groups in different governorates necessitates urgent prioritization. High prevalence of diseases and acute malnutrition directly affects negatively food security outcomes significantly.

The over 2 years protracted armed conflict and civil insecurity continues to affect livelihoods and the nutrition situation all over the country with more dramatic effect to governorates under active conflict such as Taiz, Al Hodeidah, Mareb, Hajjah, Sa'ada, Sana'a Governorate, Shabwah and Al Jawf. Both agriculture and non-agriculture livelihood activities are equally affected, especially the vulnerable groups such as poor farmers, livestock owners, fishermen, marginalized groups and civil servants who for 9th month in a row have gone without all or some of their salary. As of 01 April 2017, the Task Force on Population Movement (TFPM) has identified 2 million internally displaced persons (331,491 households) displaced due to conflict since March 2015, dispersed across 21 governorates. 10.3% of the total population of Yemen remain displaced and or have returned.⁵

The current rain season started late, so far the amount is much less than last year and even less than the long-term average. Normally, the northern and central highlands have highest potential for cereal production and receive the highest precipitation in April, but this year the two zones received poor rains. Despite the above normal rainfall in 2016, the crop production reduced by 40% due to conflict and other socio economic factors that are still present in 2017. However, due to farmers embracing short variety of sorghum in areas traditionally known for long variety the overall sorghum production may remain the same as last year or decrease marginally especially in southern uplands and Tihamma zones.

² Yemen March 2017 Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis results

³ Yemen: Cholera outbreak situation report 4 released 2nd June 2017 jointly by Health and WASH clusters

⁴ Yemen Nutrition Cluster malnutrition Caseload calculation updated in May 2017

⁵ http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/draft_tfpm_14th_report_may2017_hct.pdf



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1.2 Food Availability and Access

Yemen's food availability is heavily dependent on factors that affect importation, transportation and distribution to different locations across the country and local production. Yemen depends mostly on food importation. An estimated 1,611,428.00 MT of various food items (wheat grains, wheat flour, sugar, rice, cooking oil and milk products) were imported during period January – April 2017 out of which 1,087,110.00 MT wheat grains (67% of total imports) and 63,718.00 MT (less than 5%) wheat flour, mainly through Al Hodeidah, Al Mukalla, Aden, Assalief and Ras Eisa Seaports. The port of Aden shared 24% (390,707 MT) of the total food commodity imports, while Al Hodeidah port shared 57% (911,862.00 MT) of the total. Compared to the previous years (2014 – 2016), the imported wheat grains during same period is less by 25%. In addition to inadequate food commodity imports, poor performance of 1st 2017 cropping season indicates high probability of low harvest. Despite of the relative availability of imported food commodities, the continued airstrikes and localized fighting in different parts of the country continue restricting food distribution. Although availability of food commodities varies from time to time especially in the governorates with active fighting, economic access to food commodities is the main challenge in all governorates. Highly priced food commodities and poor purchasing power has led to consumption of less preferred foods and nearly all households has adopted a number of coping strategies to manage the situation⁶.

The economic and financial crisis has deepened further since March 2017, affecting food access to both rural and urban population. According to monthly market price bulletins published by FAO/FSTS and WFP, the domestic food prices remained high and unstable during analysis period (March - May 2017). Moreover, the prices of basic food commodities are most likely to continue increasing in the coming months due effects of conflict, further depreciation of YR against USD and due to Ramadan festivities, where the demand for food commodities typically increases substantially. This may contribute in worsening the food insecurity for poor and vulnerable households without humanitarian support. The intensification of the conflict, trade blockage, and restriction imposed by warring parties in active conflict areas, the formal market systems are crumbling (both the rural and urban population in Yemen relies on markets) and this may further result into scarcity and escalation of prices of essential food and non-food commodities.

2.0 Agriculture related livelihoods

Planting of Sorghum the main staple locally produced cereal started in most of the agro ecological zones in the second half of April. Normally, the northern and central highlands are key cereal producing zones and receive the highest precipitation in April, but this year the two zones are unusually dry. Although, some of the locations received rainfall in the first week of May, the rains ended in the second dekad in both northern and central highlands and currently the performance of crops in the zones is poor apart from farmers who are supplementing with irrigation. Generally, the prospect of the sorghum grains harvest is precarious in main producing zones, however, fodder production in southern uplands and Tihamma might do well if the current rain in the zones continues. The July rain is very critical for the success of the sorghum production, otherwise, farmers will start replacing it with barley and wheat which is the usual adaptation practices by many of the farmers in the central and northern agro ecological zones. Farmers practicing horticulture mainly depend on irrigation in all agro ecological zones. Due to limited rains and high cost of diesel for pumping irrigation water, the cost of vegetables production remains high and same is passed on to consumers.

Most of the poor people in the rural areas of Yemen are raising small ruminants and majority are landless and depend totally on the livestock raising for their basic needs. Nearly 88% of farmers are either pure livestock producers, or mixed agriculturists (EFSNA 2016). The poor rainfall performance is most likely going to affect households that depend on the fodder for their livestock and as source of income and employment opportunity for many of the rural agriculture labor force. In addition, movement of the IDPs from their original villages with their livestock is further burdening the host communities and exerting huge pressure on the pastures within the hosting areas. The livestock sector production and productivity will likely deteriorate further in the coming months, as there is no government support to the main public services, which significantly affected the veterinary disease surveillance, and vaccination campaigns to protect the livestock assets from diseases.

⁶ Weekly FSIS/FSTS Governorate Focal unit reports on food availability, access and prices - March to May 2017

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2.1 Special focus on

2.1.1 Poultry production:

The poultry sector is among the worst hit by the ongoing economic crisis. Before, maintaining the poultry flocks was very successful especially during last quarter of 2015 and throughout 2016 as the market demand was very high then. The situation encouraged the poultry farmers to raise their parent flocks and production of hatching eggs. This in turn led to the high market supply. Unfortunately, the deterioration of purchasing power of larger percentage of Yemeni households in 2017 led to huge losses in the sector. The farm gate prices decreased sharply since January to far less than the production cost. Due to this development in the poultry sector, currently most of the farmers are selling their productive flocks to minimize further losses. In addition, around 50% of the hatching eggs are not going to the hatcheries. The losses are further exacerbated by the high cost of the poultry inputs that rely 100% on the importation. The current situation of the poultry sector is threatening the sector towards collapsing. Taking into consideration of the high investment in this sector and interconnected value chain, its collapse will affect livelihoods of considerable population in the country.

2.1.2 Fish Wealth

The fishing industry is dominated by the small-scale sector, which currently supports the livelihoods of an estimated 83,367 small-scale fishers and their 583,625 household members. The sector continued to suffer due to the blockage of land, air, and marine ports for fish exports and other socio economic challenges along the value chain since the escalation of conflict in 2015. Currently, fishermen have limited access to normal fishing waters especially along Red sea coast. However, fishermen in Hajjah coast, Taiz coast, and Southern of Hodeida have totally stopped fishing and majority of them have already lost their livelihood opportunities in fishing sector. There is relative improvement on the availability of fish in the local market due to improved supply of fuel used by the fishermen around Hadramout, Aden and Abyan sea ports. There is a security issue which limited the fishing area and there are no regulatory measures to control fishing activities across all fishing areas in that corridor. Besides, there are few fish expert to neighboring countries through the port of Hadramout (al -Wadeah) and Aden through the air ports.

3.0 Recommendation for action

With the number of acutely food insecure population potentially increasing, there is urgent need to scale up existing services in all sectors addressing food insecurity in a concerted manner from all partners. The following social protection measures are recommended to mitigate the growing number of food insecure population.

- ✚ Reinstatement of the social and productive safety net programs and policies (public work programme) to reduce unemployment and support livelihoods;
- ✚ Scale up the food assistance (targeted and general food distribution), scale up the conditional and unconditional cash transfer; in April 2017, 46% of HHs targeted by Food security and Agriculture Cluster to benefit from emergency food assistance were reached and same trend was maintained since January 2017. This leaves more than half of the targeted households without access to food assistance
- ✚ Expand the emergency livelihood assistance and scale up livelihood restoration programs. By end of April 2017, 11% of 3,300,500 HHs targeted by Food security and Agriculture Cluster to benefit from emergency livelihood assistance were reached. While 39% benefited from livelihood restoration out of 199,500 - targeted households.
- ✚ Advocate for the regulatory measures to overcome the problems of scarcity and high prices of essential commodities that disrupted the economic access to food of vulnerable population.
- ✚ Review the impact of existing policies for the improvement of living conditions and resilience of vulnerable populations, especially small-scale rural producers, urban and rural poor as well as women and children. IDP and returnee households are among the most vulnerable groups that require immediate attention to reinstate/restore their livelihoods.
- ✚ Moreover, the humanitarian interventions should incorporate the support of agriculture revival as part of the economy especially agricultural based livelihoods that will help reducing the over dependency on imports to maintain and enhance local production.
 - Support the agriculture and fishery sector on improving local production and livelihoods and promoting better nutrition,
 - Poultry sector is facing unprecedented challenges, which require an urgent measure and support to save it from collapse.
 - The fishery sector is severely damaged due to the conflict and access restriction to fishing sites and cross border trade. Hence, there is an urgent need to support the fishery groups by providing necessary inputs, rehabilitating the landing sites and advocacy/lobby to lift the blockage.



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4.0 FAO's immediate response plan

To address the increasing risk of famine, access to people in need should be granted in order to put in place early actions using the twin-track approach – providing humanitarian assistance alongside resilience initiatives. Using this approach, the following initiatives are promoted and require financial assistance.

- ✓ Enhance emergency livelihood support activities, especially for agriculture, livestock, and fishing dependent communities. In particular, support backyard income-generating activities and food production to complement, enrich, and diversify food intake of severely food insecure and IDP households.
- ✓ Safeguard pastoralist assets by enabling access to livestock vaccinations, health treatments and restocking.
- ✓ Support rain-fed agriculture and livestock production by improving water access and availability through the rehabilitation of water harvesting techniques.
- ✓ Support production of highly nutritious vegetables to the most vulnerable groups, prioritizing malnourished children under-five and pregnant and lactating women.
- ✓ Initiate Cash –for- work activities to generate income and support agriculture value chains
- ✓ Finally, FAO is currently carrying out specific studies to investigate the social economic impact of current crisis on cereal production, livestock production, fishery production, horticultural production and poultry production. The findings from these studies will inform possible intervention for the specific agricultural livelihood sectors

<p><i>The Yemen Food Security Information Systems (FSIS) Development Programme is funded by the European Union and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Food Security Technical Secretariat (FSTS) of the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC).</i></p>	<p>This update presents an overview of the food security situation in Yemen as of June 2017, proposing actions to address sustainable Food Security in the country.</p> <p>Contact: FAO /FSIS Programme: FSIS-FAOYE@fao.org, +967-1-432 681 /2 MoPIC/FSTS: drmukred@yemen.net.ye; Tel: +967 733 725348</p>
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