

bulletin

Tajikistan Food Security Monitoring System

The Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS) provides a seasonal snapshot of food insecurity in rural Tajikistan by analyzing data from 665 households and the nutritional status of 959 children under 5 and 918 women between 15-49 years old. The FSMS can alert to incidents of critical food insecurity and nutrition.



Overview of household food security and nutrition between February and August 2010

FOOD SECURITY

- Overall food security situation appears to have improved compared to the previous round, with 7% (down from 10%) of the households interviewed classified as severely food insecure and 16% moderately food insecure (decreased from 21%).

Rural households benefit from a fairly good harvest, better livestock health and breeding, higher remittances and seasonal jobs.

- High staple food prices represent the main threat to households' food security. High prices are mainly due to external factors: speculation of local traders due to recent wheat export ban in Russia, reduced harvest in Kazakhstan and increase in fuel prices.
- Major structural issues remain including: lack of access

to drinking and irrigation water and unemployment.

- Severe food insecurity is confined to natural disaster affected areas, especially the potato harvest and the loss of crops in kitchen gardens, stocks and livestock.

NUTRITION

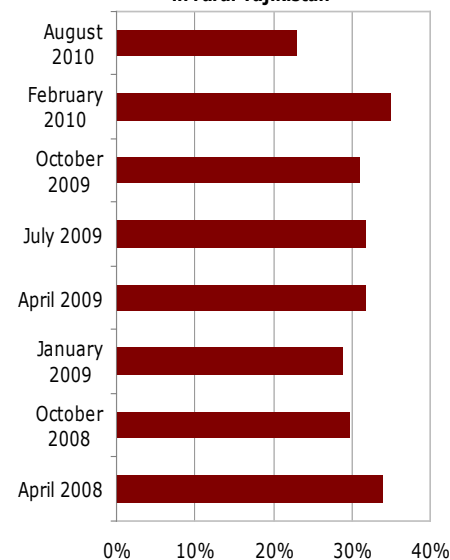
- Malnutrition is at the same levels as last year in July but higher than in the UNICEF National Survey due mainly to seasonality. 10% of the children are wasted and 33% are stunted. The main causes remain lack of nutrition knowledge of the caretaker, diseases, quality of drinking water and hygiene practices.

- Underweight women represent 7.7% of all the women interviewed while 19.5% are overweight. Both conditions are due mainly to a lack of diverse diet, nutrition knowledge and lack of access to food because of high food prices.

Focus on most the food insecure zones – August 2010

Zone 17 - Jirgatal Rasht Tojikobod	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • poorly diversified food consumption (cereals, tea and some fruits) • high food prices as main shock and loss or delay of potato harvest due to heavy rains • few assets owned (few animals) and 67% of budget is spent on food • 97% do not have sufficient stocks for the coming months • lowest estimated monthly income (371 TJS-\$83/month/family)
Zone 13 - Nurobod Roghun Tavildara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • poorly diversified food consumption (cereals, tea and some fruits) • 1/3 of the mothers/care takers report often not meeting food needs of their children • loss or delay of potato harvest due to heavy rains (main income), lack access to drinking and irrigation water. The main sources of income have become daily wage labor and begging/borrowing • few assets (86% own no livestock) sold in past 3 months to cope with difficult situation • 93% of budget is spent on food and 91% have no food stocks
Zone 10 - Ghonchi, Rasulov Shahrstan Zafarobod	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high food prices, main shock in the past 3 months • main sources of income are remittances (for 50% of the households), daily unskilled labor and sales of crops • low estimated monthly income (600 TJS-\$135/month/household), poor food consumption lacking proteins

Percentage of food insecure households in rural Tajikistan*



*Among the 700 to 900 households interviewed

Outlook for the coming months (August to November)

- Livestock and good harvest combine to maintain an overall good food security in the country. Households can rely on their own production and livestock (less diseases reported) to meet their food needs and to accumulate income and stocks for the coming winter. Nonetheless, some areas of the country have had a less productive harvests and the situation should be closely monitored in parts of the Rasht Valley, Sughd and in the Fayzobod district.
- Fuel prices have continued to increase and despite negotiations between the Tajik and Russian governments, it is unlikely that the situation will change in the coming months. As high food prices remain the main issue for the food access of rural households, it will be important to continue monitor prices in the coming months, especially in zones with a low harvest.
- Expenditures on staple foods continue to take the bulk of disposable income due to high wheat prices in the market. Prices for fruits, vegetables and animal products will continue to be at their lowest and allow households to diversify their food intake. As the winter nears, households in remote areas will start stocking essential products such as wheat and potatoes, increasing their food expenditures. Traditionally, expenditures on health also increase in the winter.
- Daily wage labor opportunities will continue to provide more seasonal income. The sales of crops, orchard produces, livestock and agricultural products will contribute to the food security of households who own these assets. Others will benefit from September to November from the increase in remittances.
- Food consumption should remain higher than in other seasons as households have an easy access to fruits and vegetables. It is expected nonetheless to remain low and poorly diversified for poor families and households living in remote areas.

Shocks*

The main shocks over the past three months are linked to agriculture: lack of irrigation and harvest failure. Natural disasters in several areas of the country, wiped out fields, carried off livestock, collapsed houses and washed away top soil irrigation. Water remains a major problem despite high spring precipitations. Unusually high levels of crop pests and diseases are also to be noted in Pendjakent, Ayni, Asht and Turzunsoda. Other areas (Sughd and DRD close to Dushanbe) reported locusts as a main issue for their crops/pastures (Ministry of Agriculture estimated 100,000 ha affected).

* Shocks are defined by an event that has a negative impact on food and nutrition security. Shocks can be natural or caused by human action

One fourth of the households in the sample had a reduced access to drinking water over the past 3 months. A major part of the problem was that natural disasters destroyed irrigation system. Nevertheless, access to drinking water and irrigation is also a structural problem that requires substantial investments in the coming years.

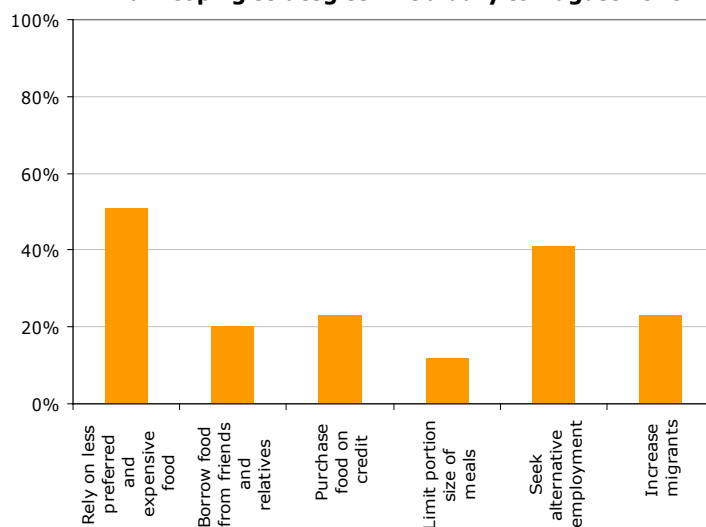
Unusually high food prices still represent the main threat to households' food security (33% of the households interviewed). Households also mentioned that high fuel prices and transport costs (also due to the new toll road in certain areas) were a major constraint to their access to food markets both for acquiring and selling food. Natural disasters, mainly due to excessive rains between May and July also created pockets of food insecurity pushing borderline food insecure households into deeper food insecurity in Asht, GBAO (Bartang Valley), Ayni, Rasht and some parts of Khatlon such as Kulyab.

On the positive side, less households mentioned loss of income and animal diseases (unlike last year at the same period).

Coping strategies†

To respond to chronic and seasonal problems and in order to maintain an acceptable food security status, households engaged mainly in the coping strategies highlighted below:

Main coping strategies - February to August 2010



Compared to February and July 2009, households rely more on altering their food consumption, on their family and on credit to cope with difficult situations than on reducing less essential expenditures (transport, clothes, events) and sending migrants abroad. As a result, almost half of the families interviewed are taking new debts and the Coping Strategy Index shows no improvement overall.

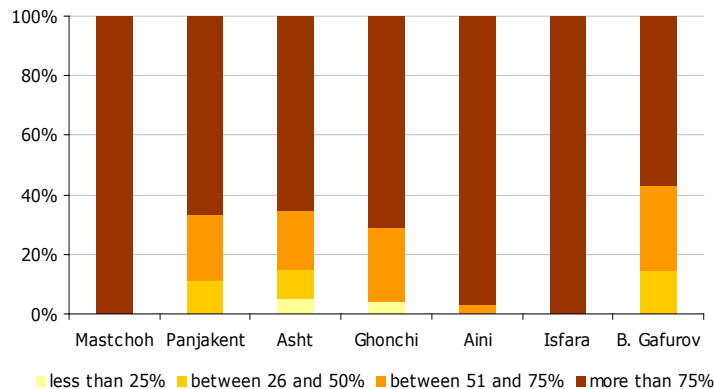
† The coping strategy index takes into account the frequency of use of the most harmful coping mechanisms

Although overall households do not own many assets, livestock breeding conditions, less disease and good pasture conditions allow families with animals to sell their healthy livestock in exchange for food. Households also look for alternative employment: unskilled daily work and migration outside of the country.

Migration

Migration showed similar trends to previous rounds (two third of the households have migrants leaving for Russia). The main difference with February is that almost 40% of the households declare receiving regular remittances over the past three months. Two thirds of the households receiving regular money transfers declare that remittances represent more than 75% of their total income. This is particularly true for households in the northern region of Sughd.

Remittances as percentage of total income in Sughd region



Only households receiving remittances are included, n= 249. Covers February to August

Several reports point towards an increase of remittances at the national level since the beginning of the year. Discussion with local and national banks representatives confirmed this trend.

Agriculture, livestock ownership and conditions

This round substantiates once more that most rural households (80%) own livestock but many of them own few heads. According to discussions with veterinarian services and with heads of agriculture departments in several regions, the livestock situation in the country is propitious. Good rains in spring allowed for good pastures again this year and prices of animal feed have consequently gone down. There is also no major malady reported. Households depending on herding and sales of livestock products should then be able to take advantage of commanding high prices for meat and dairy products. Key informants, FAO and representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture in all regions confirmed that the wheat harvest will be above the 5-year average but slightly lower than last year at around 800,000 tons. Potential losses due to natural disasters, late rains, lower temperatures than average and diseases such as yellow rust need still need to be estimated. For example, the dehkan farm association of Fayzo-

bod reported losses of more than 50% of their harvest of wheat and fruits due to freezing rain in May. Farmers did not have the means to replant. The graph below shows the estimated production for some of the main grain production areas of the country.

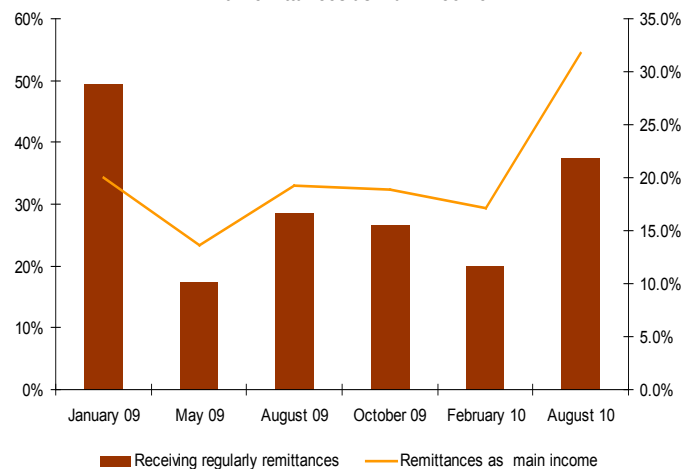
Fruits and vegetables harvest shows similar trends. The main issue noted by farmers with fruits was that the ban imposed by Russia on the import of fruits from Tajikistan during the polio outbreak has caused losses of production and a decrease of income for households relying heavily on orchards. In one of the main area for potato production, the Rasht Valley, farmers associations and heads of dehkan farms reported that high levels of precipitations delayed planting and harvest making it vulnerable to early frosts. Households' main income source is delayed as well and they may have difficulties coping in the meantime. Finally, the production on private kitchen gardens is reported to be of good quantity allow households to stock food for the winter.

Income and expenditures

Over the past four months, remittances have become a major source of cash income. Since February, the number of households reporting daily labor in construction and agriculture as their main income increased. Sales of crops, orchard and livestock products represent, combined, the main income for 30 to 35% of the households interviewed. The Government, through pensions, benefits and salaries, provides the most important second source of income for 35% of the households in rural areas. This is consistent with other rounds.

64% of households' expenditures go to food (same as last round and in late July last year). However, the seasonal increase of income is offset by the recent increase in fuel and related transport costs. Thus overall, 50% of the interviewees report their economic situation to be worse than last year.

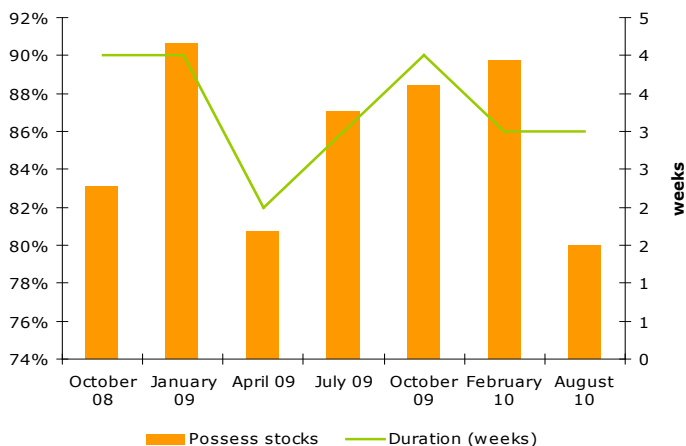
Percentage of households regularly receiving remittances and with remittances as main income



Food sources, food stocks and markets

Typically the local market in spring and summer (four month period) provides fruits and vegetables in greater abundance at lower prices. This is why reserve food stocks are not as voluminous at this time of the year. Eighty percent of the households interviewed still declare having stocks but most are of short duration (especially oil and fruits). On the other hand, when asked if they would have enough stocks for the coming months (before the winter starts), two thirds of the interviewees cited a poor harvest and insufficient financial resources to put in the necessary winter stocks.

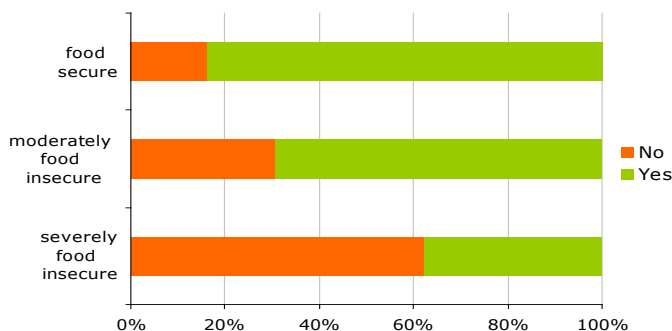
Percentage of households possessing wheat stocks and average duration



Causes of household food insecurity over the past three months

The households interviewed show distinct characteristics depending on their food security status. In general, food insecure households spend a higher percentage of their income on food (78% for severely food insecure against 65% for food secure). This is typical of households with limited income and lack of assets, including land.

Percentage of households owning livestock by food security status

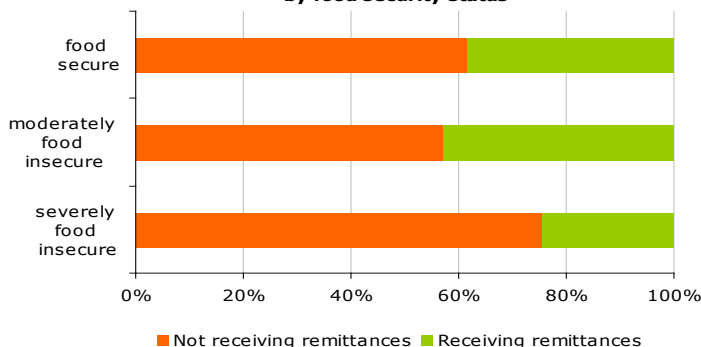


A household that has access to a garden consumes these products directly and is less likely to have to purchase food, using the saved income to diversify food items or invest in assets, health, clothes for

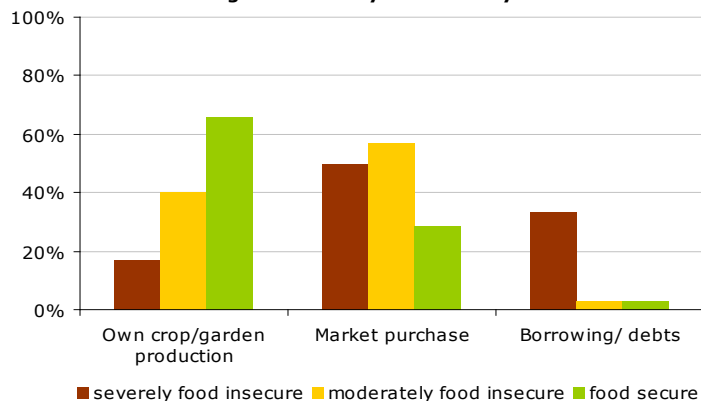
children, etc. They also have less difficulty satisfying the food needs of their children than severely food insecure households of which one third reports facing difficulties.

Food secure households can rely on more stocks, livestock and more regular (and certainly more consequent) remittances to meet their food needs than food insecure households.

Percentage of households receiving remittances regularly by food security status

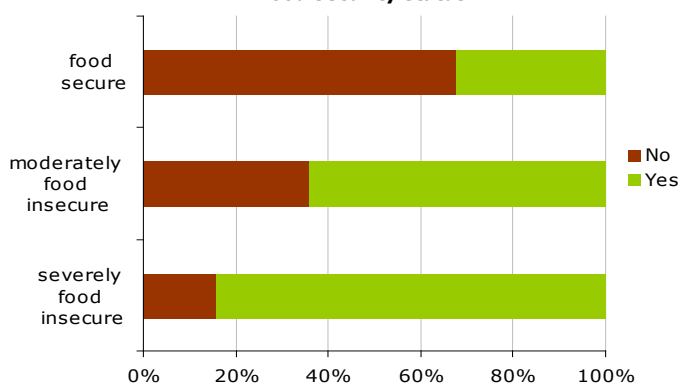


Origin of stocks by food security status



Food insecure households on the other hand will rely on begging, borrowing money and food from relatives and friends, and social networks to make ends meet (84% of severely food insecure households had contracted new debts in the past three months compared to 33% among food secure families).

Percentage of households taking new debts by food security status



RESULTS OF THE NUTRITION COMPONENT

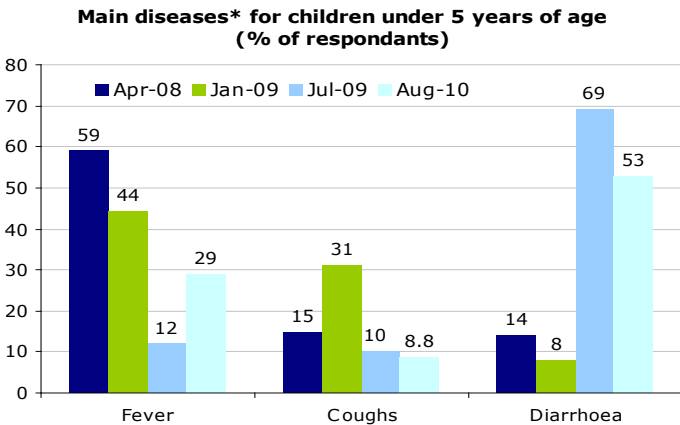
Introduction and methodology

The nutrition situation in rural Tajikistan was assessed in January 2009, July 2009 and August 2010 in order to capture seasonal changes and trends. Children under 5 were measured and weighted as well as women between 19 and 49 years. Furthermore, infant feeding practices have been assessed.

		CHILDREN	WOMEN
Regions	GBAO	104	86
	DRD	193	217
	Khatlon	323	269
	Sugd	345	379
Sex	Female	472	951
	Male	493	-
Age	0-6 months	93	-
	6-24 months	372	-
	24-59 months	500	-
	Total interviewed	965 (959 measured)	951 (918 measured)

Health status

About 34% of the children were sick prior to this assessment compared to almost 30% in July 2009 and the types of disease are the same. Whereas the main seasonal diseases in winter were fever and coughs, the survey in July 09 and August 10 reported diarrhea as the main disease.



Diseases two weeks before the survey

Two thirds half of the sick children have been brought to a health center in the two weeks preceding the assessment. The main reasons for not bringing the child to health services were the lack of severity of the disease and lack of money. The latter reason increased almost twice since January 2009.

NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS

Amongst the 946 children measured, 10% [CI 8.1-12.0] were wasted and 33.1% stunted [CI 30.0-36.1].

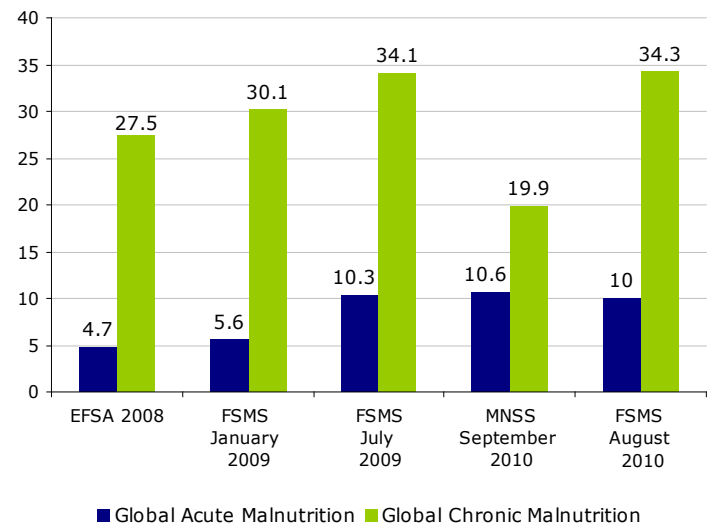
PREVALENCE OF MALNOURISHED CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS (%)

Weight for height	Severely wasted	5.3
	Moderately wasted	4.7
	Pre-obese	4.9
	Obese	2.0
Height for age	Severely stunted	12.8
	Moderately stunted	20.3

These results are similar to the rates obtained in July 2009 (10.3% and 34.1% respectively). They confirm the upward trend observed since April 2008 (figure below) when 4.7% wasting and 27.5% stunting were reported.*

Compared with the Macronutrient National Status Survey conducted in 2009 by UNICEF and the Ministry of Health, the results of the September 2010 assessment show an increase in child stunting from 20% to 33%, while wasting has practically not changed, with rates of 11% in 2009 and 10% in 2010.

Trend in Global Acute and Chronic Malnutrition since 2008 (%)



The severe and moderate wasting rates are higher among children under 24 months compared to older age groups and severe and moderate stunting are high in all children, particularly among those older than 24 months.

The high wasting rates particularly in the 6-11 months age group is likely to be associated with poor infant feeding practices. Another reason for the higher wasting rates in the summer months might be related to the increased incidents of diarrhoea, which can quickly de-stabilize normal weight gain in growing children.

Overall stunting rates show higher levels in August 2010 than in April 2008 and January 2009. High rates in stunting can be related to diets poor in micro-nutrients chronic diseases that are generally

* Emergency Food Security Assessment in Rural Areas of Tajikistan (EFSA), A Joint Food Security, Livelihoods, Agriculture and Nutrition Assessment, April/May 2008

hygiene-related. At the same time, 6.9% [CI 6.4-11.5] of children are overweight, which is significantly higher than in July 2009 (4.3%). It reflects the double burden of over- and under-nutrition, which has also been observed in other central Asian countries.[†]

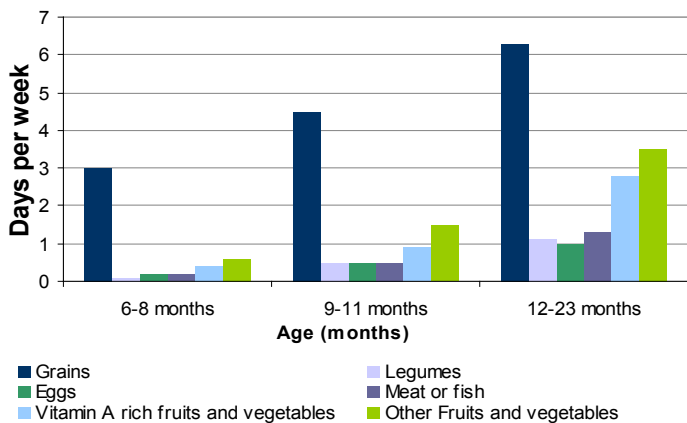
Underweight is a particular problem among children under 24 months age. This clearly reflects a failure to seize the "window of opportunity", which is defined as the period from conception to 24 months of age of the child. Nutrition and feeding practices interventions targeted at children in utero through 24 months of age will have the greatest impact.[‡]

Continued breastfeeding and introduction of complementary foods

Dietary diversity in children between 6 to 11 months was low (less than three food groups during last week[§]).[¶]

Dietary diversity decreased in all age groups compared to July 2009 and particularly for children 12-23 months (from 80% in July 2009 to 40% in August 2010). This can partly be attributed to the recent increase in food prices by 25%.^{**} The average number receiving meat, eggs or legumes for all age groups the week before the assessment is very low.

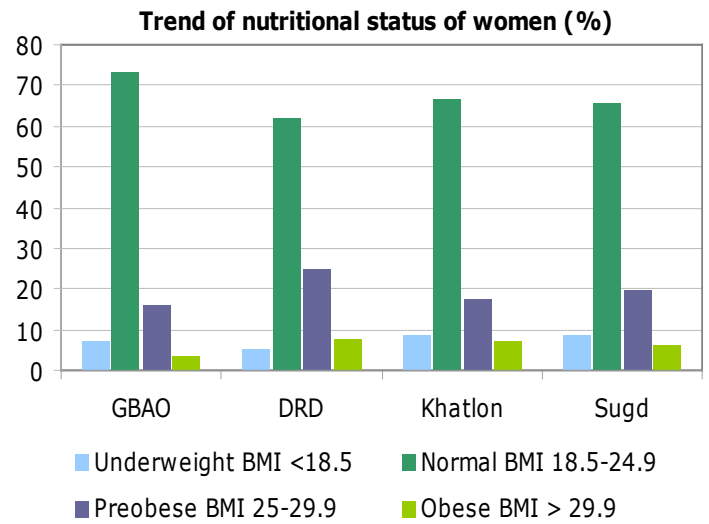
Dietary diversity of children 6-24 months



NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF WOMEN, 19-49 YEARS

The results on nutritional status of women showed a similar contrast between underweight and obese cases. The percentage of underweight women slightly increased (8.4% in July 2009 to 7.7 % in

August 2010).



Food consumption of women, 19-49 years

The percentage of women consuming five or more food groups during the week before the assessment was down from 20% in July 2009 to 16% in August 2010. As with children, food intake showed similar dietary patterns. The diet of most women remains poorly diversified, with meat, fruits and beans rarely eaten more than once a week. The fact that all groups consume massive amounts of cereals and tubers might suggest cultural, rather than economic patterns.

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Previous reports on food security can be found on [www.wfp.org/food security](http://www.wfp.org/food%20security) and www.untj.org/library or by contacting WFP in Tajikistan.

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Views expressed hereby are those of the authors only.

[†] Cattaneo A, Child nutrition in CEE and CIS countries: report of a situation analysis, 2007

[‡] Lancet series, 2008

[§] The dietary diversity score ranges from 0 to 7, including the following food groups: Grains, roots and tubers; legumes and nuts; Vitamin A-rich fruits and vegetables; other fruits and vegetables; dairy products; eggs; meat, poultry, fish, and shellfish.

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^{**} WFP weekly food price assessment, Goskomstat monthly price monitoring, August 2010