



KEY FINDINGS

- Presence of AGEs in some of the surrounding villages has complicated food deliveries to some district markets by traders; however household access to the local district markets is not a concern. AGE activity has also caused road closures to Kuf Ab, Wakhan and Darwaz districts, whilst illegal taxation, high transportation cost and bad road conditions have also hindered traders access to some of the districts.
- Food prices have increased for all staple commodities in all assessed districts of Badakhshan when compared to Takhar and Kunduz centre supply markets ,due to increased transportation costs and normal road closure due to heavy snow-fall in Badakhshan. However, the price of rice was reported to be 9 percent lower in Shakhi district.
- Supply of food commodities is mainly from Tajikistan border to Kunduz province, from where it is further supplied to Darwaz, Shaki and Kuf Ab districts while food supply to Wakhan, Khwahan and Koran Wa Mojan is primarily from centre markets of Takhar province.
- Though the assessed districts has security issues and concerns, while households have not faced safety security risks and issues in performing livelihood activities and accessing markets. However, availability of casual labour work is very limited (1 – 2 day/week) mainly due to remote geographic location of the assessed districts, harsh winter season and fewer industries and lack of agricultural production due to the current winter season.

Assessment Background and Methodology

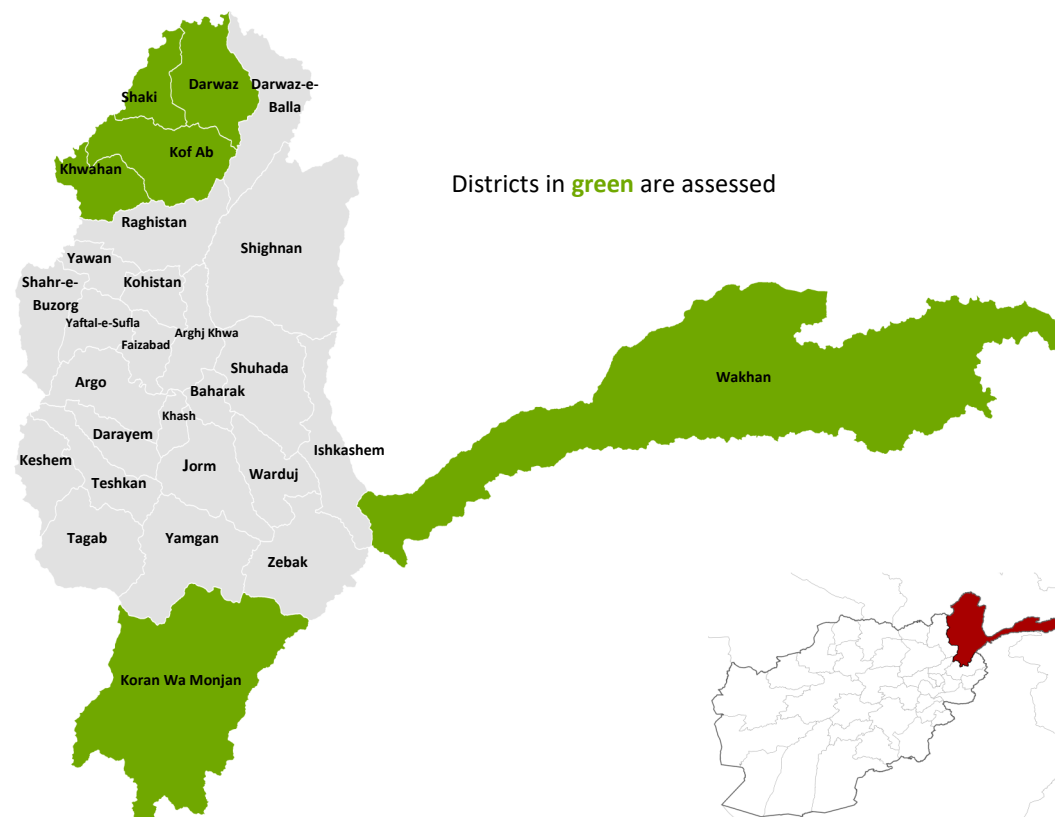
WFP mVAM has been conducting market assessments since December 2016 in Southern and Eastern regions of Afghanistan. In November 2017, WFP conducted its first mobile market monitoring assessment in northern region and obtained data from 6 districts (**Shaki, Darwaz, Kuf Ab, Khwahan, Wakhan and Koran Wa Monjon**) of Badakhshan province, where many are hard-to-reach due to remoteness, conflict and insurgent activities.

Therefore, the primary aim for this assessment is to gain information on market functionality, food prices, food supply, traders ability to access markets and food security condition of the population in the enlisted districts.

A total of 30 interviews were conducted (5 interviews per district) from 22nd & 23rd November by the mVAM team. All the interviews were carried out with key informants such as traders, CDC members and Shura leaders.

Access and Security

Most of the respondents in the assessed districts reported that the security situation improved over the past 3 months despite the AGEs presence in some of the surrounding villages which complicates delivering food to some district markets by traders. However household access to the local district markets is not a concern. Traders in Kofab, Wakhan and Darwaz indicated that road closures due to AGE activities on the supply route is an issue which affected prices and delivery of food. The insecurity contributes greatly to increasing food prices and reducing supply of food items to the markets. Apart from insecurity, the illegal taxation, poor road conditions and high transportation costs also contributed to increase in food prices and decrease in supply of food commodities.



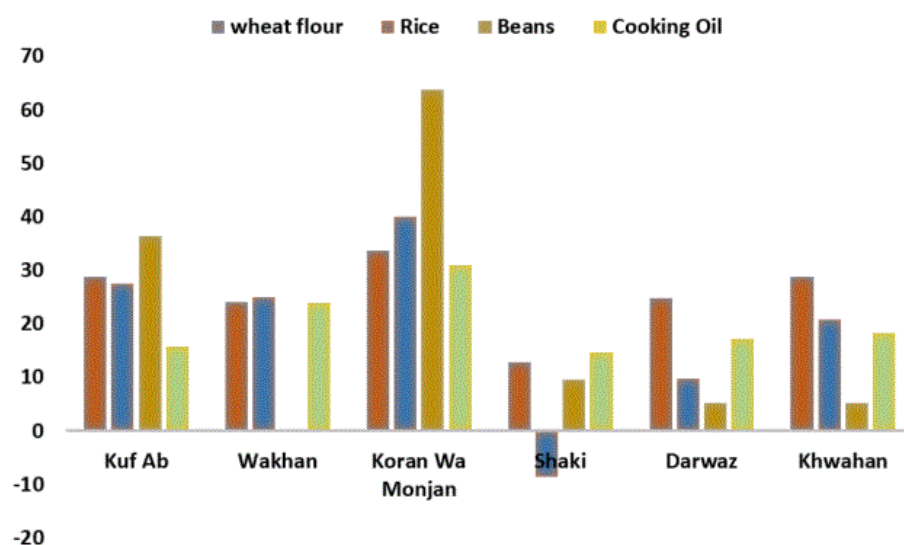
Food Prices

The prices for the staple foods (wheat flour, rice, beans and cooking oil) in Darwaz, Khwahan, Kuf Ab, Wakhan and Koran Wa Monjan district markets have increased compared to last month mainly due to roads closure in winter and high transportation costs which makes it difficult for traders to hire transporters.

The supply of food to Wakhan, Kofab and Koran Wa Monjan is mainly from Takhar province, while supply to Shaki, Darwaz and Khwahan is mainly from Kunduz province. The findings indicates that retail food prices in all the assessed districts are significantly higher compared to Kunduz and Takhar central markets.

Among all the assessed districts, the highest food prices were reported in Koran Wa Monjan district, followed by Kof Ab, Wakhan and Khwahan. The main reasons for these higher prices are the road closure, insecurity and higher transportation cost. The lowest prices were reported in Shaki and Darwaz districts mainly due to lower transportation cost compared to the other assessed districts of Badakhshan province.

Figure 1. Percentage changes in wheat flour, beans, rice and cooking oil prices compared to the prices of Takhar and Kunduz main city markets



Note: In the graph, retail prices of food commodities in Wakhan, Kuf Ab, Koran Wa Monjan districts are compared with the prices of Takhar main city market, while retail prices of food commodities for Shaki, Darwaz and Khwahan districts are compared with the Kunduz main city market prices.

The retail prices for staple foods are significantly higher for Korano Monjan and Wakhan districts compared to food prices in centre markets of Takhar which is main food supplying source to the mentioned districts. While, the lowest price for all the food commodities was reported in Shakhi district with the price of rice 9 percent lower due to lower transportation costs.

In all the assessed districts, it was reported that availability of pulses is very limited, particularly in Wakhan district where all key informants indicated that pulses are not available in the market. The reason is mainly due to high cost of pulses by traders and very low purchasing power of the local people, so lower demand.

Traders indicated that food prices will further increase during winter season and will remain high for the next 2-3 months, mostly due to heavy snow fall resulting in road closure to the assessed districts and stopping food supplies. Among all the assessed markets, the market of Wakhan will be the most affected due to heavy snow fall.

Figure 2: Average prices of food commodities in the district markets of Badakhshan

District/Province Name	Wheat flour*	Rice**	Beans	Cooking Oil
Kof Ab	32	102	120	97
Wakhan	31	100	0	104
Koran Wa Monjan	33	112	144	110
Takhar	25	80	88	84
Shaki	28	75	104	94
Darwaz	31	90	100	96
Khwahan	32	99	100	97
Kunduz	25	82	95	82

Note: The retailer prices are collected for all the commodities mentioned in Figure 1 and 2. All the prices are in AFN/Kg-Lit

* **Wheat flour price is collected for high quality**

** **Rice price is collected for high quality**

Food Supply

Supply of food commodities is challenge for all the traders from Tajikistan border (Sher Khan Port) to Kunduz main city market and from Kunduz main city to the markets of **Darwaz, Shaki and Khahan**. However **Koran Wa Monjan, Wakhan** and **Kuf Ab** districts primarily rely on food imports from **Takhar** central market.

Food supply to all the assessed districts is only through the main supply route (Sher Khan port to Kunduz and Takhar) and there are no alternate routes used for food supply. Traders in the assessed districts indicated that they face difficulties in supplying food commodities to the assessed district markets due to illegal taxation on every check point, as well as seasonal increase in transportation costs. Meanwhile, poor road conditions in **Darwaz, Khwahan and Kuf Ab** obstruct delivery of food commodities to the local district markets, resulting into limited food availability in the market, which significantly increases prices of the staple commodities such as wheat flour, rice, sugar and cooking oil.

Supply of food commodities is sufficient to most district markets except for a shortage of wheat flour that was reported by informants for **Shakhi, Kofab** and **Koran Wa Monjan** district markets, as well as a shortage of pulses in **Wakhan** district market.

Livelihood Opportunities:

Due to improved security conditions within the cities, key informants in all assessed districts reported no safety concerns or security risks for households in performing livelihood activities. However, availability of casual labour work is very limited (1–2 days/week) and households are rarely able to earn enough to meet their needs. The limited availability of casual labour is mainly due to remote geographic location, prolonged and harsh winter season as well as few industries and lower levels of agricultural production. The average daily wage for the unskilled labour is AFN 375 in all assessed districts with the highest labour wage found in Khahan district (AFN 425), while the lowest is reported for Karan Wa Manjan (AFN 312) district.

Terms of Trade

The **terms of trade (ToT)** between wheat flour and casual labour is a proxy indicator for **household purchasing power**, which shows the quantity of wheat flour that can be purchased with the wage earned from one day of casual (unskilled) labour.

The highest terms of trade is reported in Shakhi, Darwaz and Khahan districts (13 kgs of wheat flour/daily wage), followed by Kof Ab and Wakhan districts (12 kgs of wheat flour/daily wage). The lowest ToT was reported in Karan Wa Monjan district (9 Kgs of wheat flour/daily wage), where the labour wage is reported the lowest (AFN 312/day).

The casual labour wage in all the assessed districts is relatively the same with the casual labour opportunities being very limited in all the assessed districts of Badakhshan compared to Kunduz, Takhar and the capital of Badakhshan province. The availability of casual labour wage in the capital of Takhar, Kunduz and Badakhshan is 3-4 days per week while in the assessed districts it is reported to be 1-2 days in a week.



Photo source: Retail shop in Kabul / Julie Martinez—WFP