Sri Lanka

FOOD SECURITY MONITORING

OCTOBER 2022

Remote Household Food Security Survey Brief

This brief was developed by WFP in November 2022, comparing the previous four months of household food security data. This complements the results of the Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission, which refers to data collected for June 2022.

Sri Lanka:
IN NUMBERS

Food security remains at concerning levels

36%

OF PEOPLE ARE FOOD INSECURE (rCARI)*

People continue relying on coping strategies to put food on the table

76%

RESORTING TO COPING STRATEGIES
Food-based coping strategies

- **73%** are relying on less preferred food
- **52%** are limiting portion sizes
- **40%** are reducing the number of meals

Vulnerable households are bearing the brunt of the food crisis

43%

of households in estate areas are food insecure, compared to 36 percent in rural areas and 34 percent in urban areas

44%

of female-headed households are food insecure, compared with 34 percent of male headed households

**Remote Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Insecurity (CARI).*

In Brief

Sri Lanka's economic crisis has deepened the risk of food insecurity; 36 percent of households are food insecure. In 2019,[1] food insecurity levels in the country stood at 9.1 percent.

Over the past three months, food security levels have relatively stabilised but still remain concerningly high. Yala harvest is available in local markets, there has been a recent price reduction of staple foods and a release of food stocks into local markets as reported by wholesale traders.

Households continue to apply strategies to keep food on the table. Nearly eight in ten households are regularly turning to food-based coping strategies and over five in ten households are pawning items or formally borrowing money in order to eat.

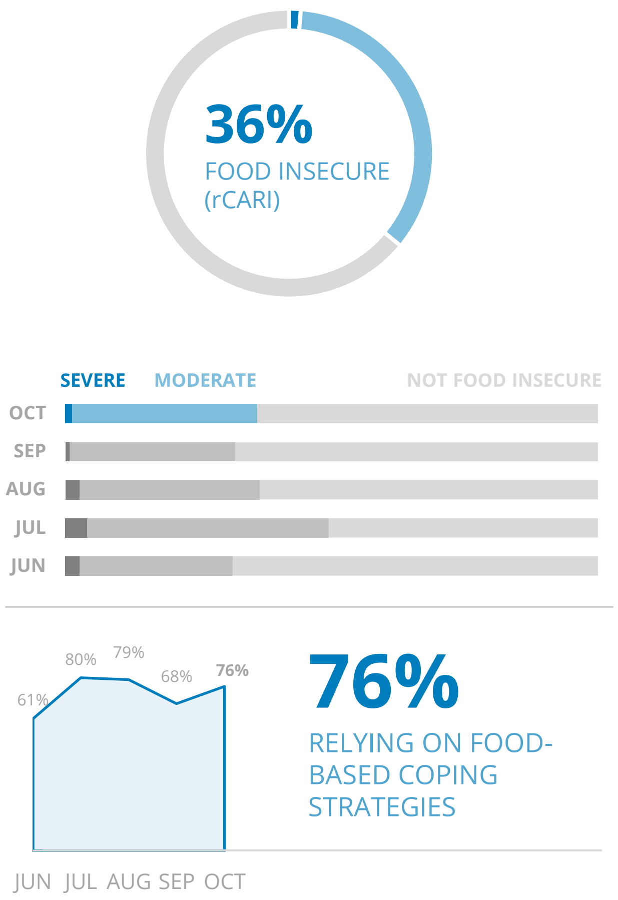
Food prices remains a primary concern for nine out ten households. With limited purchasing power, over 50 percent of households are purchasing food on credit.

Consumption of adequate diets remains low. Thirty five percent of households are facing insufficient food consumption, with many consuming far less diverse and nutritious diets.

The crisis continues to disproportionately impact different segments of society. Female-headed households are faring worse than male-headed households, while those in the estate areas consistently experience higher levels of acute food insecurity than those in urban and rural areas. Similar disparities can be found across income sources.

The upcoming lean season is likely to further deteriorate the situation. A combination of factors could exacerbate food insecurity in the upcoming months during Maha cultivation, including import restrictions and the ongoing economic crisis.

Food security continues to be at threat.



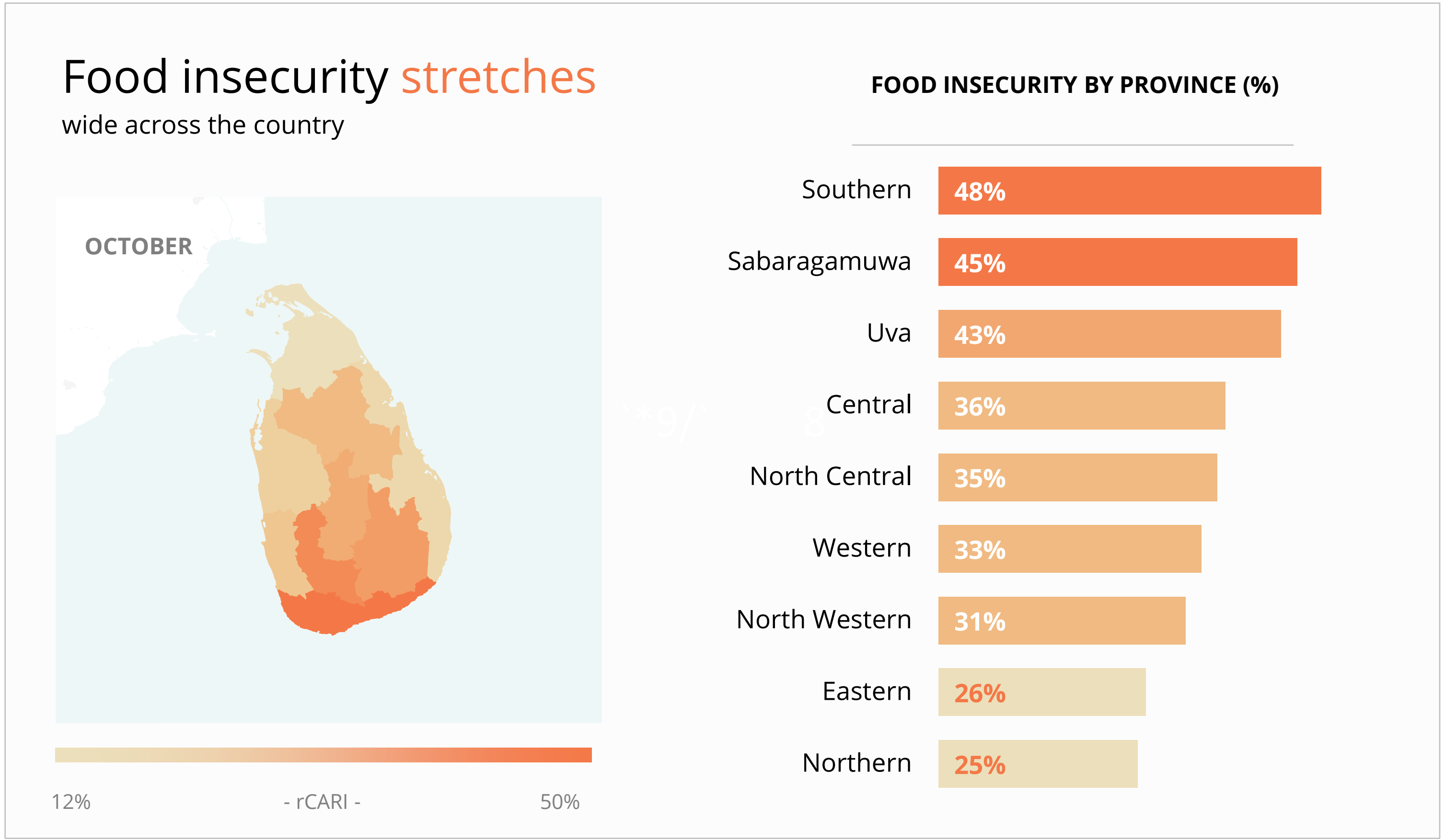
[1] *Household Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES), 2019*

Findings

Thirty six percent of households are facing acute food insecurity[2], which continues to be of concern. In October, food insecurity saw an increase of four percentage points compared to September. The prevalence of food insecurity remains stable when comparing with the last remote survey conducted in August (36.5%).

Almost half of the households (48 percent) in Southern province were food insecure, followed closely by Sabaragamuwa province (45 percent). Six out of nine provinces saw a rise in food insecurity between September and October, namely Uva, Southern, North Central, Central, North Western and Eastern provinces. There was a reduction in food insecurity in Northern province of 8 percentage points from September.

Severe food insecurity levels across all provinces have remained below 4 percent since June. In October, Southern and North Central provinces have the highest percentage of households that are severely food insecure at 3.6 percent.



[2]Acute food insecurity as measured by the rCARI. More detail on the CARI is available here

Food Insecurity over the months

JUNE

28%

Food Inflation: **75.8 percent**
Methodology: Face-to-Face

Widespread shortages of fuel, medicines. Poor Maha harvest.

The joint Humanitarian Needs and Priorities Plan is launched.

JULY

49%

Food Inflation: **82.5 percent**
Methodology: Phone based

Island wide protests, political instability, intense fuel shortages and high food inflation.

Schools re-open after month long closures. Public sector offices remain closed.

AUGUST

37%

Food Inflation: **84.6 percent**
Methodology: Phone based

Continued political instability, lack of fuel supplies and skyrocketing inflation.

Farmers carry out the Yala harvest.

SEPTEMBER

32%

Food Inflation: **85.8 percent**
Methodology: Face-to-face

Availability of Yala harvest in the markets and release of food stocks.

Government reaches a preliminary agreement with the IMF for US$2.9 billion.

OCTOBER

36%

Food Inflation: **80.9 percent**
Methodology: Phone based

Main Maha season planting begins.

Certain households are faring worse than others.

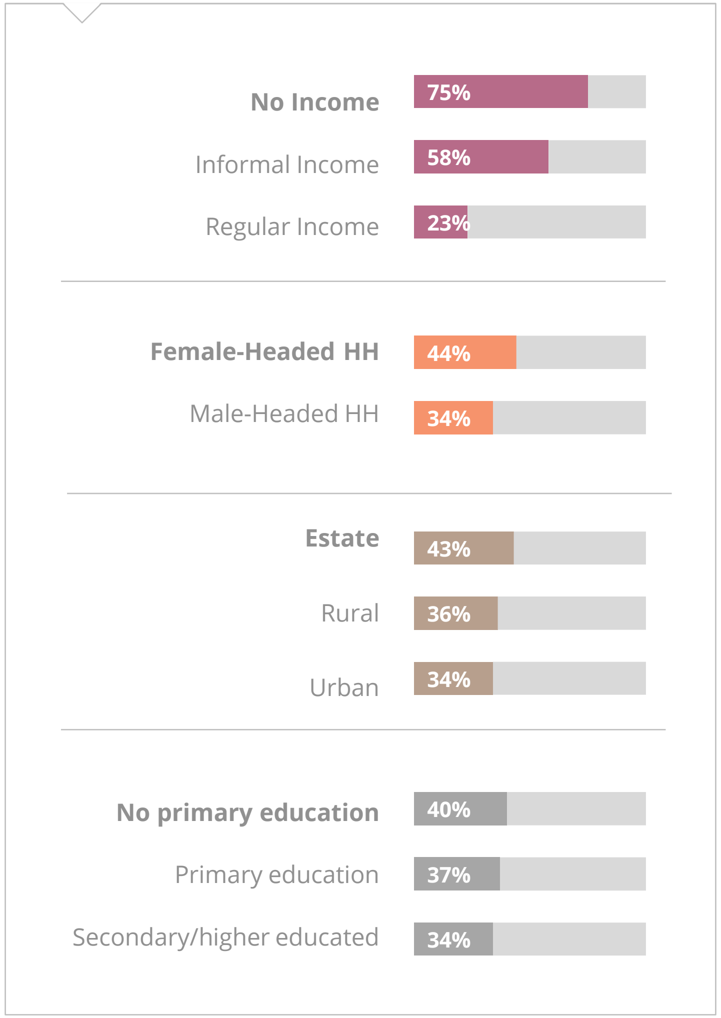
There remains a sharp divide between households with and without regular incomes. Over seven in ten households without incomes and nearly six in ten households with informal incomes are facing food insecurity. This is a clear-cut disparity compared to the two in ten households that have regular incomes.

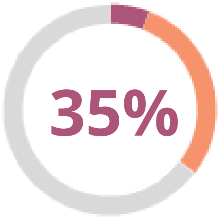
Female-headed households continue to be more severely affected. In October, a ten percentage point gap between female-headed and male-headed households was reported. The percentage of severely food insecure female-headed households (2.8 percent) is nearly three times male-headed households (0.97 percent).

As with previous months, estate households are faring worse than rural and urban households. Estate households producing crops and/or livestock for household consumption had slightly better food security (68 percent) than those without (61 percent).

Households of varying education levels had distinctive divides in food security levels. Forty percent of households with no primary education were food insecure while those with at least secondary level education were at 34 percent.

FOOD INSECURITY BY HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS (%)





are not consuming adequate diets.

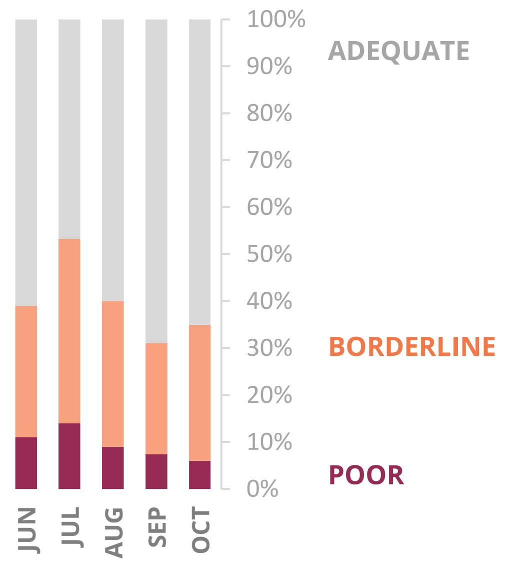
Over three in ten households are facing insufficient food consumption. Animal protein, dairy and fruit are consumed less than three days a week by the average household. Consumption of dairy has halved since June and continues to be the lowest-consumed food group.

Consumption of staples, fats and sugar saw a marginal increase while vegetable consumption remained the same as in September. Inadequate diet consumption has remained stable the last three months.

In Uva, Sabaragamuwa, Southern and North Central provinces, four in ten households (43 percent) are facing inadequate food consumption. Diets are at higher risk for female-headed households, where 43 percent are experiencing insufficient food consumption.

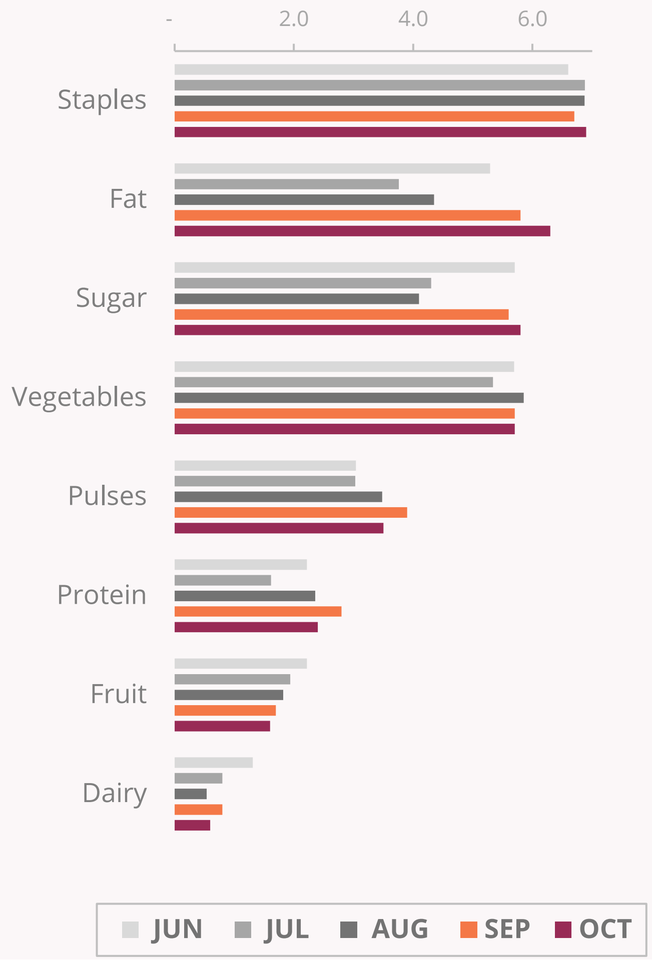
Four in ten estate households are consuming inadequate diets. Households with no income to rely on were at a significant disadvantage, with nearly half the households (48 percent) facing insufficient food consumption. Households with informal incomes were facing similarly poor consumption levels at 43 percent.

FOOD CONSUMPTION GROUP



FOOD CONSUMPTION

Number of days the average household consumes the following food items (every seven days)

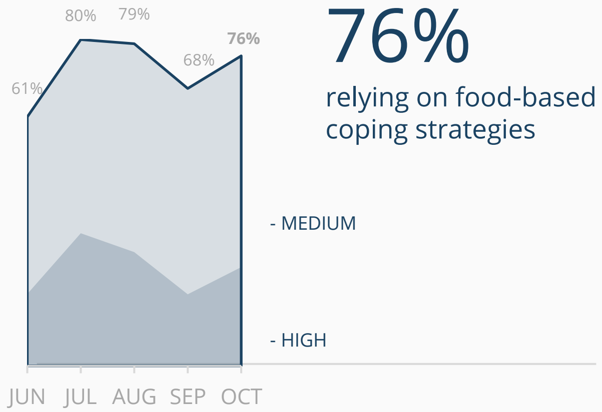


Over half of households are borrowing money to put food on the table.

Reliance on food-based coping strategies was reported by 76 percent of households in October, continuing the alarming trend observed since June. Use of negative coping strategies remains high, similar to results seen in July and August.

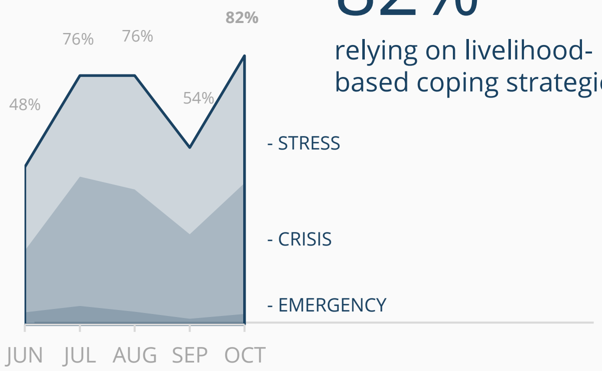
A staggering eight in ten households are turning to livelihood-based coping strategies, the highest since monitoring began in June**.** In October, only Northern province experienced a decrease in the application of livelihood coping strategies. By turning to more extreme measures such as selling productive assets, households are exceedingly minimizing their ability to cope with future shocks.

Reliance on coping strategies has seen a significant increase, but households continue to compromise the quality of their diets. In fact, households borrowing money to put food on the table has seen a steep increase of 16 percentage points in October, compared to September.



76%

relying on food-based coping strategies



82%

relying on livelihood-based coping strategies

STRATEGIES EMPLOYED IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS BECAUSE OF A LACK OF MONEY OR FOOD (SEPTEMBER)

73% are relying on less preferred food

52% are limiting portion sizes

40% are reducing the number of meals

STRATEGIES EMPLOYED IN THE LAST 30 DAYS TO COPE WITH A LACK OF FOOD OR MONEY (SEPTEMBER)

56% borrowed money from a bank/lender (or pawned goods)

44% had to reduce spending on education and health

43% spent savings and/or skipped debt payments

Anxieties about food and fuel prices persist.

Food prices remain the most pressing concern in recent months; nine in ten households cited this as a worry. Concerns around fuel prices also persist, though not nearly as high, with 23 percent of households citing this as a worry. Compared with July, the proportion of people worrying about fuel prices has decreased, likely due to the recent reductions in fuel prices.

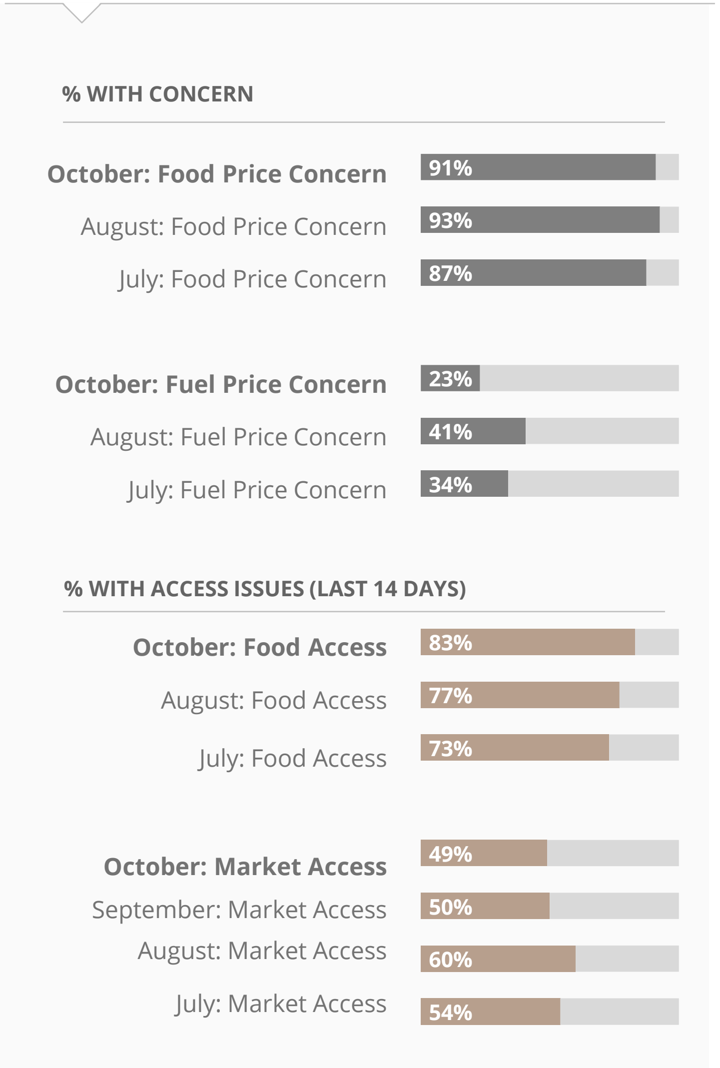
Worries about food and fuel prices cut across various household characteristics such as female and male-headed households, area of residence, income and education levels.

People are facing trouble accessing markets and food.

Eight in ten households are reporting poorer access to regular food items. Location and loss of income are likely the major reasons for households reporting issues in accessing regular food items. A staggering nine in ten households reported concerns around food access in estate areas, closely followed by eight in ten households in rural areas.

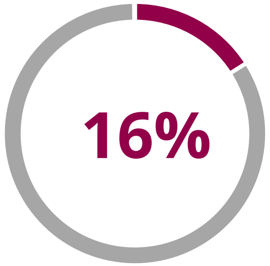
Lesser households are reporting restrictions in accessing markets, coinciding with the limited restoration of fuel supplies. Households in estate areas are at the largest disadvantage (78 percent), followed by rural (48 percent) and urban (46 percent) areas.

CONCERNS AND ACCESS[3]



[3] Data for these questions was not collected in the September face-to-face survey.

Assistance preference

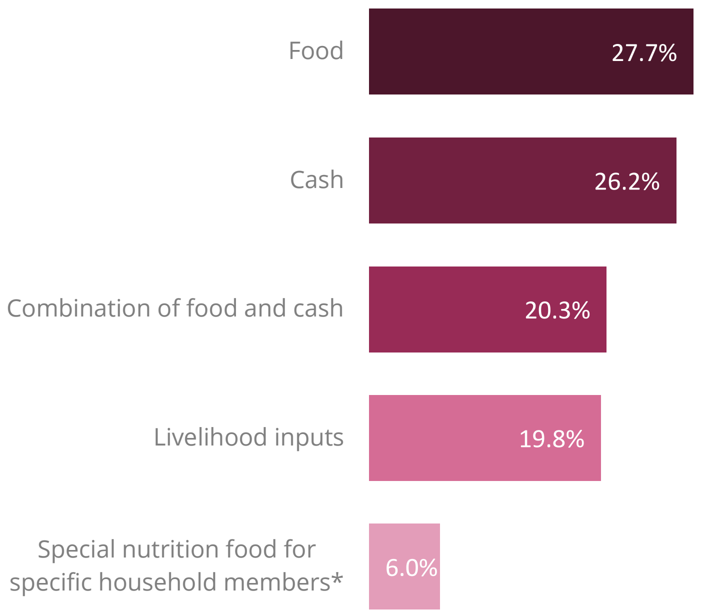


of households are receiving some form of assistance.

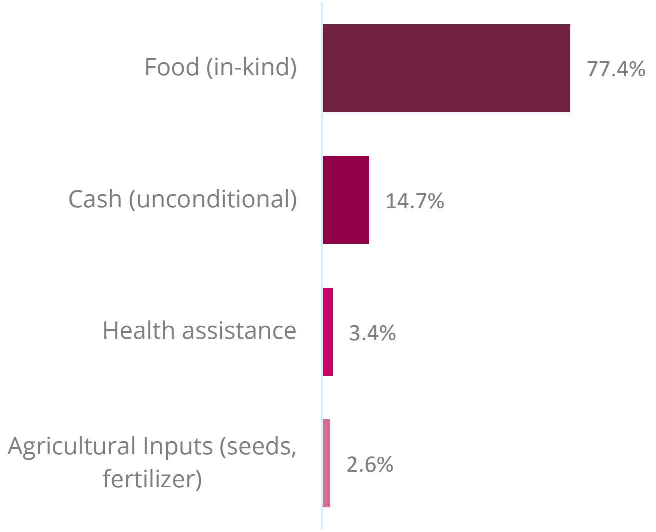
Sixteen percent of households reported having received some type of assistance in the last 30 days (either from government, NGO or UN agency) to help cope with the effects of the economic crisis. Among the assistance received, 77 percent was food (in-kind) and 15 percent of households reported receiving cash assistance.

In terms of assistance preference as a means of coping with the effects of the economic downturn, there was little difference reported between cash and food. About 20 percent of households prefer receiving a combination of food and cash while 20 percent requested immediate access to livelihood inputs to help with the economic hardship.

HOUSEHOLD ASSISTANCE PREFERENCE



TYPE OF ASSISTANCE RECEIVED



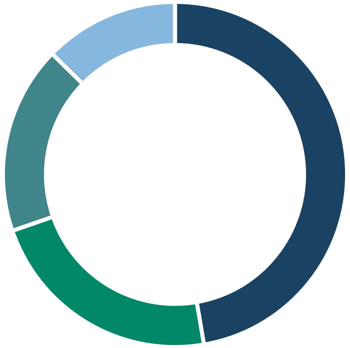
*pregnant women, infants, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and chronic illnesses

Agricultural Outlook

The availability and cost of chemical fertilizers are farmers' primary concern this forthcoming Maha season (2022/23). Compared to July and August, concerns regarding fuel were significantly lower. Additionally, pest and diseases, and erratic precipitation, are issues that farmers are anticipating.

Fifty one percent[4] of farmers plan to cultivate the same area that they did during the previous Maha season (2021/22). Due to projected obstacles such as chemical fertilizer supply and cost, 39 percent of farmers report that they intend to cultivate less area during the Maha season than they did during the previous season.

MAHA SEASON: KEY FARMER CHALLENGES



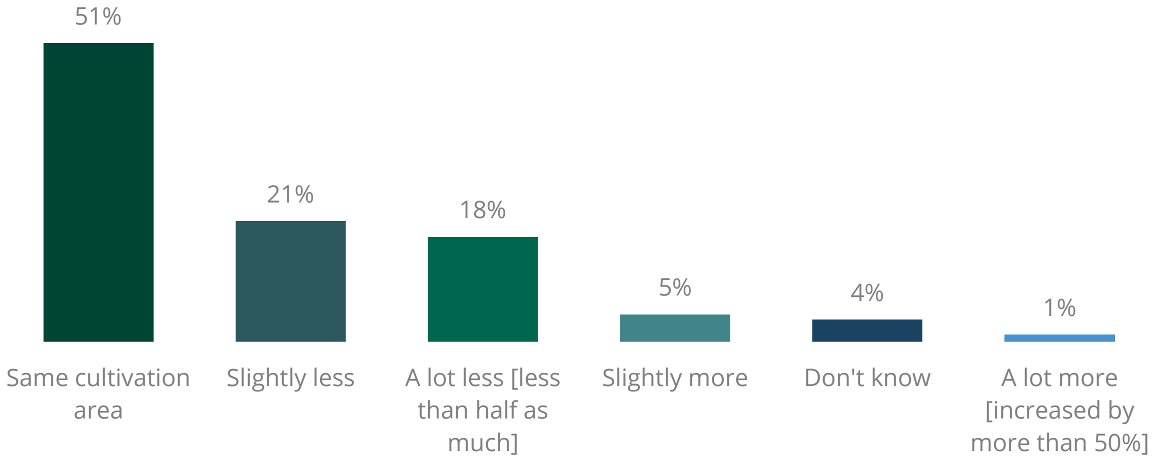
35% fertilizer

17% pests and diseases

13% rainfall and extreme weather

9% fuel shortages

FARMER CULTIVATION PLANS FOR MAHA 2022/23



[4] *The results were based on the opinions of farmers, although the sample size of farmers does not statistically represent the national level.*

Background and Methodology

Sri Lanka is facing an unprecedented macroeconomic crisis that has caused acute shortages and spikes in the prices of essential products. The combination of major disruptions to agricultural production, depleted treasury, unfavourable harvests, high prices, and many halted economic activities, have collided to unleash a substantial impact on food security.

This situation in Sri Lanka comes in the midst of a global food crisis which has generated a wave of upheaval in the markets and exacerbated the situation even further.

Amid this context, WFP is rolling out monthly household food security surveys through mobile vulnerability analysis and mapping (mVAM) and face-to-face primary data collection. A high-frequency data collection food security surveillance system is used to understand the changes in the food security situation and underlying factors across the country.

Due to the application of both phone and face-to-face data collection, there are limitations in comparability of food insecurity between the two methods. [5]

The October round consisted of 2,267 surveys across all nine provinces through a CATI data collection approach. Households were randomly selected following a 2-stage cluster sampling method. In each province, 30 clusters (GN) were randomly sampled with probability proportion to population size.[6] Results are statistically representative at the provincial level and final results are weighted to account for survey deviations from provincial as well as urban/rural/estate population distributions based on the 2012 census.

This comes as part of WFP's efforts to expand its evidence generation initiatives to inform the response among government and humanitarian/development partners in Sri Lanka.

[5] A modified version of the CARI (rCARI) was calculated for this report. The calculation of rCARI does not require the collection of a lengthy expenditure module which is impractical for high frequency, phone-based surveys. Readers are therefore cautioned when interpreting direct comparisons between the food insecurity findings from this phone-based survey and recent face-to-face surveys

*[6] The sample size was set to allow provincial-level estimates with a precision of 7% and confidence intervals equal to: estimate ± 1.96 * SE (standard error).*

Annex: Tables

Overall

Food Insecurity (rCARI)	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT
Food Secure	20.1	10.9	16.0	20.5	11.7
Marginally Food Secure	48.4	39.7	47.5	47.9	52.3
Moderately Food Insecure	**28.8**	**45.3**	**33.8**	**30.8**	**34.7**
Severely Food Insecure	**2.6**	**4.1**	**2.7**	**0.8**	**1.3**
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies					
None	52.3	23.8	23.7	45.9	17.9
Stress	25.1	31.1	35.1	24.9	35.8
Crisis	18.8	39.5	37.2	27.5	43.1
Emergency	3.7	5.6	3.9	1.7	3.2
Food-based Coping Strategies					
No/Low	38.9	20.5	21.0	32.2	24.1
Medium	43.5	47.1	51.1	50.3	51.6
High	17.6	32.5	27.9	17.5	24.2
Food Consumption Group					
Acceptable Food Consumption	60.9	46.9	60.4	68.9	64.8
Borderline Food Consumption	28.4	39.4	30.8	23.6	29.3
Poor Food Consumption	10.7	13.7	8.8	7.4	6.0

June values in these tables have been recalculated to ensure comparability on a remote CARI for comparability with July and August results. The difference with previous references in this document, and with the CFSAM. More detail on the CARI is available here.

By Sector

	Estate					Rural					Urban				
Food Insecurity (rCARI)	**JUN**	**JUL**	**AUG**	**SEP**	**OCT**	**JUN**	**JUL**	**AUG**	**SEP**	**OCT**	**JUN**	**JUL**	**AUG**	**SEP**	**OCT**
Food Secure	7.5	3.3	8.5	10.9	4.8	21.0	10.7	16.7	18.2	11.0	18.9	14.0	14.8	32.9	16.5
Marginally Food Secure	47.3	43.1	40.8	52.8	51.8	48.3	40.1	49.1	48.5	53.0	49.4	37.3	42.2	44.0	49.5
Moderately Food Insecure	**43.3**	**50.0**	**46.1**	**35.3**	**41.3**	**28.3**	**44.9**	**31.7**	**32.5**	**34.9**	**27.1**	**45.8**	**40.0**	**22.2**	**31.9**
Severely Food Insecure	**2.0**	**3.7**	**4.5**	**0.9**	**2.1**	**2.3**	**4.4**	**2.6**	**0.8**	**1.1**	**4.6**	**2.9**	**3.0**	**0.9**	**2.1**
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies															
None	26.8	8.1	13.7	39.3	5.4	55.7	23.6	23.1	45.1	16.9	41.1	28.6	28.9	51.8	25.5
Stress	30.7	48.9	53.2	25.7	43.1	23.2	32.7	35.3	23.7	37.1	34.5	19.5	29.8	29.5	28.2
Crisis	36.7	40.5	25.0	28.9	42.6	17.7	38.3	38.7	30.1	44.0	19.2	44.4	34.0	16.1	39.2
Emergency	5.8	2.6	8.1	6.1	8.9	3.4	5.4	2.9	1.1	2.0	5.2	7.5	7.3	2.6	7.1
Food-based Coping Strategies															
No/Low	20.9	14.9	17.6	37.7	23.7	38.8	21.0	21.9	30.9	24.2	45.6	19.3	17.8	35.3	23.8
Medium	43.6	42.0	42.7	41.9	36.8	45.0	47.2	53.8	526	52.8	34.4	47.7	41.1	43.9	49.9
High	35.4	43.1	39.7	20.4	39.5	16.2	31.7	24.3	16.4	23.0	20.0	33.0	41.1	20.8	26.3
Food Consumption Group															
Acceptable Food Consumption	62.4	49.2	43.6	61.0	58.9	59.6	46.1	62.0	67.4	64.0	67.7	49.7	57.0	77.8	69.4
Borderline Food Consumption	28.4	41.3	45.9	32.6	34.9	30.1	39.9	29.1	24.9	30.1	18.6	37.0	34.8	15.5	23.9
Poor Food Consumption	9.3	9.5	10.5	6.4	6.2	10.3	14.0	8.9	7.7	5.8	13.7	13.3	8.2	6.7	6.7

By Sex of Head of Household

	Female-Headed HH					Male-Headed HH				
Food Insecurity (rCARI)	**JUN**	**JUL**	**AUG**	**SEP**	**OCT**	**JUN**	**JUL**	**AUG**	**SEP**	**OCT**
Food Secure	13.0	7.2	12.6	16.3	10.1	21.6	11.7	16.7	21.4	12.1
Marginally Food Secure	42.6	39.4	41.7	43.8	46.1	49.6	39.8	48.7	48.9	53.8
Moderately Food Insecure	**38.0**	**49.7**	**40.7**	**38.3**	**41.1**	**27.0**	**44.3**	**32.3**	**29.1**	**33.2**
Severely Food Insecure	**6.4**	**3.8**	**5.0**	**1.5**	**2.8**	**1.9**	**4.2**	**2.3**	**0.7**	**1.0**
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies										
None	46.9	26.7	28.8	49.6	19.1	53.4	23.2	22.7	45.1	17.7
Stress	23.2	29.4	28.3	19.6	34.7	25.5	31.4	36.5	26.1	36.0
Crisis	23.1	39.0	36.8	28.4	43.5	17.9	39.6	37.3	27.2	43.0
Emergency	6.8	4.9	6.1	2.5	2.7	3.1	5.8	3.5	1.6	3.3
Food-based Coping Strategies										
No/Low	31.7	15.2	18.0	26.3	22.5	40.4	21.6	21.7	33.5	24.5
Medium	43.8	46.5	40.3	53.9	49.3	43.4	47.2	53.4	49.5	52.5
High	24.5	38.3	41.6	19.8	28.2	16.2	31.2	25.0	17.0	23.3
Food Consumption Group										
Acceptable Food Consumption	51.7	45.4	51.3	62.9	56.7	62.8	47.2	62.3	70.3	66.6
Borderline Food Consumption	32.6	35.9	36.6	26.4	34.4	27.5	40.2	29.5	23.0	28.1
Poor Food Consumption	15.7	18.7	12.1	10.8	8.9	9.7	12.6	8.1	6.7	5.3

By Income Source

	None				Informal				Regular			
Food Insecurity (rCARI)	**JUL**	**AUG**	**SEP**	**OCT**	**JUL**	**AUG**	**SEP**	**OCT**	**JUL**	**AUG**	**SEP**	**OCT**
Food Secure	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.8	3.7	3.8	3.6	15.7	22.1	32.3	16.3
Marginally Food Secure	13.5	17.6	31.2	25.2	26.3	34.8	41.5	38.7	47.4	54.7	53.2	60.6
Moderately Food Insecure	**67.1**	**65.6**	**59.3**	**61.5**	**62.0**	**55.9**	**53.7**	**55.6**	**36.4**	**22.6**	**14.4**	**23.0**
Severely Food Insecure	**19.4**	**16.8**	**9.5**	**13.3**	**9.8**	**5.7**	**0.9**	**2.1**	**0.6**	**0.6**	**0.1**	**0.1**
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies												
None	31.3	47.0	49.2	19.4	16.4	18.3	43.5	15.6	26.6	24.4	47.2	18.9
Stress	31.6	20.1	17.6	34.4	28.6	36.8	24.7	36.7	32.1	35.4	25.6	35.5
Crisis	28.5	22.0	29.6	40.2	47.2	41.3	29.1	43.4	36.8	36.6	26.3	43.2
Emergency	8.6	10.9	3.7	6.0	7.8	3.6	2.7	4.4	4.5	3.6	1.0	2.4
Food-based Coping Strategies												
No/Low	7.7	8.4	20.5	18.4	10.6	16.1	24.1	19.0	25.7	23.9	38.1	26.9
Medium	41.9	36.6	49.3	48.2	48.9	48.0	52.9	51.1	46.6	53.3	48.9	52.2
High	50.4	54.9	30.2	33.4	40.5	35.9	23.0	29.9	27.7	22.8	13.1	21.0
Food Consumption Group												
Acceptable Food Consumption	30.9	30.3	54.0	52.1	36.9	48.2	58.4	57.1	52.3	67.4	76.6	69.2
Borderline Food Consumption	48.3	55.9	28.4	35.1	44.6	35.5	30.9	36.1	36.6	27.2	18.8	25.7
Poor Food Consumption	20.9	13.8	17.6	12.9	18.5	16.2	10.7	12.9	11.1	5.5	4.6	5.1

Annex: Resources

Additional WFP products related to the crisis in Sri Lanka:

MARKET MONITOR

A regular summary of changes in the market, with a focus on changes in prices for food and fuel.

SITUATION REPORTS

A regular update on the situation and WFP's response to the crisis.

MARKET FUNCTIONALITY INDEX

An assessment of the functionality of selected markets for cash-based assistance

HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY SURVEYS

A monthly survey providing regular insight into household food security.

Acknowledgements
Mairi Sun, Shehan Fernando, Aaron Wise, Clinton Tedja and Yumna Salman, under the guidance and leadership of Abdur Rahim Siddiqui, Kimberly Deni, and Andrea Berardo.

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World Food Programme

SRI LANKA

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