Kyrgyz Republic

Food Security Monitoring Update  December 2022

Situation Update

- The COVID-19 pandemic has reversed a decade of development gains in just two years. Poverty has sky-rocketed from 20.1% in 2019 to 33.3% in 2021, with an additional 10% being at risk of falling in poverty. Extreme poverty reached 6% in 2021 from 0.5% in 2019.¹

- According to the National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic, headline inflation in November 2022 was 13.8%, lower compared to the 15.4% recorded in October, the highest inflation rate since July 2011, and among the highest in the region. Food inflation for key staples is at 16.2% and CPI for fuel and lubricants at 30% in November 2022.²

- Remittances has decreased by 15 percent in January-October 2022, compared to the same period in 2021 (NBKR).

- WFP has established a food security monitoring system, conducting bi-monthly household surveys to track food security trends.

Survey Highlights

- The December 2022 food security assessment found that 15% of households, or more than 1 million people, were acutely food insecure, a decrease of 2 percentage points compared to October 2022. This could be explained, in part, by improved food consumption due to harvest in October.

- Prevalence of food insecurity was slightly higher in rural areas (16%) compared to urban areas (14%). Food insecurity was highest in Talas, Jalal-Abad and Naryn regions and more prevalent among female-headed households.

- About 1 in 10 households were consuming an inadequate diet (12%) and an additional 7% had an acceptable food consumption but were employing severe coping strategies.

- 76% of households were using some type of asset depleting coping strategies (relying on savings and money borrowing), with 15% of them using emergency coping strategies (selling assets – last cattle, land or house – or asking for assistance).

- 9% of households reported that their income had decreased since January 2022, with an average decrease of 40%.

- For both food and non-food items, the key hindering factor to their purchase was the economic accessibility (lack of money) and affordability (high food prices).

² NBKR: https://www.nbkr.kg/index.jsp?lang=ENG
Due to higher population density, Jalal-Abad region and Bishkek city account for 46% of all food insecure population.
According to the December 2022 survey, 15% of households were food insecure (13% moderately and 2% severely food insecure) compared to 17% in October. The largest improvements in food insecurity were observed in Batken (-13%) and Osh regions (-8%). More than half of the population (54%) remains only marginally food secure.

Talas (28%), Jalal-Abad (22%) and Naryn (20%) regions, show the highest levels of food insecurity. Food insecurity was driven by insufficient food consumption, high dependency on assistance and use of negative coping strategies.

Household characteristics strongly correlated with food insecurity include female-headed (21%); having primary-school-aged children (6-11 years of age) and presence of people with disabilities/ chronically ills members.

---

Figure 2. Comparison of food insecurity (rCARI) between October and December 2022

Figure 3. Food insecurity (rCARI) in December 2022 by status and geography (%)

5 The rCARI is a composite indicator which reflects both current status (food consumption) and coping capacity (economic vulnerability & livelihood coping). For more details, see: Technical Guidance for WFP Consolidated Approach For Reporting Indicators of Food Security (CARI), Third Edition, December 2021.
Over a tenth of all household had insufficient food consumption levels (12% - a decrease of 3% compared to last month). This improvement could be because October is still the harvesting season for potatoes and other vegetables and fruits. Therefore, food is generally cheaper and households begin stocking for winter.

An additional 7% had an acceptable food consumption but was employing severe coping strategies.\(^6\)

Talas region (20%), Osh city (17%), and Chui region (14%) were the three areas with the worst food consumption results.

In the past 7 days, 37% of all households felt worried of not having enough food, a decrease of 4% compared to the previous issue.

Almost half of households (43%) had some difficulties eating enough food over the past 7 days: 33% ate less expensive or less preferred food, 7% skipped meals or ate less than usual and 3% went at least one whole day and night without eating.

---

\(^6\) This estimate is based on the Food Consumption Score (FCS) indicator which measures dietary diversity and food frequency. A household food consumption score is calculated according to the types of foods consumed during the previous seven days, the frequencies with which they are consumed, and the relative nutritional weight of the different food groups.
Households were using negative food-based coping strategies in the past 7 days, such as less desirable/less expensive food (42%), including 20% doing so regularly\(^7\) or other strategies as shown in Figure 5.

76% of households were using some asset depleting coping strategies: 31% of households used 'stress' coping strategies, 30% of them used 'crisis' coping strategies and 15% used 'emergency' coping strategies (Figure 6).

The use of negative coping strategies has direct negative consequences to the nutritional, health and productivity status, which are difficult to reverse in the future, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and vulnerability.

---

\(^7\) "Regularly" defined as using the food-based coping strategy at least 4 times in the past 7 days.
Only 9% of households reported that their income had decreased since January 2022, with an average decrease of 40%.

Income losses were particularly concentrated within households living in Osh city (18%) and in Naryn (12%) and Chui (10%) regions.

Food insecure households heavily rely on assistance or support. This can imply that assistance is rightly channeled, reaching the most vulnerable, but not enough to enable graduation from food insecurity. More needs to be done to promote active labour market policies to facilitate access of the most vulnerable to regular employment.

**Figure 7. Sources of income (% HHs) and in relation to food security and demographic characteristics**

- **Regular employment (formal labour or self-employed)**
- **Regular employment but reduced income / remittances / agriculture**
- **Irregular labour or significant decrease in income**
- **Dependent on assistance or support**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Income</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Food secure</th>
<th>Marginally food secure</th>
<th>Moderately food insecure</th>
<th>Severely food insecure</th>
<th>Dependent on assistance or support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households headed by ethnic minority</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households headed by ethnic majority</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female-headed</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male-headed</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Access to Market

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Access to Food Items</th>
<th>Household Access to Non-Food Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Households who could access all food items with no problems</strong></td>
<td><strong>Households who could not access any food item that are usually part of their diet by this time of the year</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Households who could access all essential non-food items with no problems</strong></td>
<td><strong>Households who could not access any essential non-food item that are usually buying during this time of the year</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reasons:**
- Prices of food items significantly increased (47%)
- Lack of money (48%)
- Lack of money (50%)
- Prices of food items significantly increased (46%)

- Around half of all households reported experiencing difficulties in buying sugar (49%), vegetable oil (49%) and flour (46%).

- These are three commodities for which the country heavily relies on import to satisfy the internal demand. The main reason was the **high price** of the commodity (89%).

- For both food and non-food items, physical access to the market and availability in stores were not an issue.
The December 2022 food security survey was conducted between 25 November - 02 December and covered 9 stratas: all 7 provinces and 2 large cities (Bishkek and Osh).

A two-stage cluster sampling was applied to select 1) communities/data collection sites in each strata and 2) households in each data collection site.

- Confidence interval = 95%
- Margin of Error = 7%
- Estimated prevalence = 50%

A minimum sample of 200 households were interviewed in each strata, resulting in a total sample of 1,800 households.

The survey used a phone-based (CATI) methodology. Response rate: 21% (8,407 calls) mainly due refuse to participate (27%) out of service phones (26%), and no answer (22%), which may have affected impartiality to some extent.

The results were weighted to account for population size and share of rural/urban population.

For more information:
Research, Assessment and Monitoring unit
World Food Programme in Kyrgyz Republic
CO.KYR.RAM@wfp.org

Website: wfp.org/countries/kyrgyz-republic
Other: hungermap.wfp.org/