




Sri Lanka

FOOD SECURITY MONITORING

DECEMBER 2022

Remote Household Food
Security Survey Brief



This brief was developed by WFP in December 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



33%

OF PEOPLE ARE FOOD INSECURE (rCARI)*

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



68%

RESORTING TO COPING STRATEGIES
Food-based coping strategies



67% are relying on less preferred food



43% are limiting portion sizes



35% are reducing the number of meals

Vulnerable households are bearing the brunt of the food crisis



38%

of households in estate areas are food insecure, compared to 34 percent in rural areas and 28 percent in urban areas



37%

of female-headed households are food insecure, compared with 32 percent of male headed households

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

In Brief

According to the December assessment results, 33 percent of households are food insecure. In 2019,¹ food insecurity levels in the country stood at 9.1 percent.*

Over the past four months, food security levels have remained above the 30 percent range. According to wholesale traders, prices of staple foods have decreased due to the release of food stocks into local markets, and the general food inflation rate started to fall in October.

Households turning to food-based and livelihood-based coping strategies continue to be reported across the country. Nearly seven in ten households (68 percent) are adopting food-based coping strategies, and the majority of households are consuming less preferred food.

Food and fuel prices remain a prime concern for many households. Fifty-eight percent of households are purchasing food on credit.

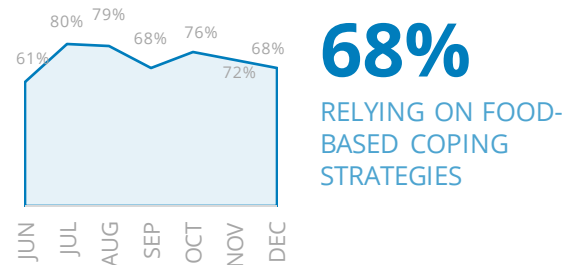
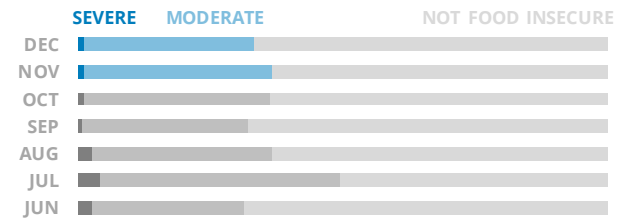
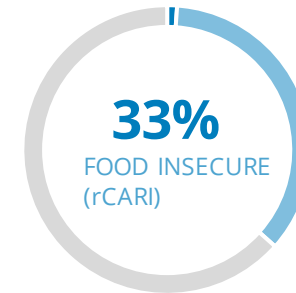
Consumption of adequate diets remains low.

Thirty percent of households are facing insufficient food consumption, with 43 percent consuming limited portions.

Female-headed households continue to fare worse than male-headed households. Households in the estate and rural areas experienced higher levels of acute food insecurity than those in urban areas in December. Similar disparities can be found across income sources.

The ongoing lean season (November –January) is likely to further deteriorate the situation. A combination of factors could exacerbate food insecurity in the upcoming months during Maha cultivation less productivity, including import restrictions, vegetable production reductions due to monsoon effects such as flooding, high demand for food for the festive season, and the ongoing economic crisis.

Food security continues to be at threat.



¹ Household Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES), 2019.

* The objective of both FIES and rCARI is to determine food insecurity. However, the methodologies and tools vary from one another.

Findings

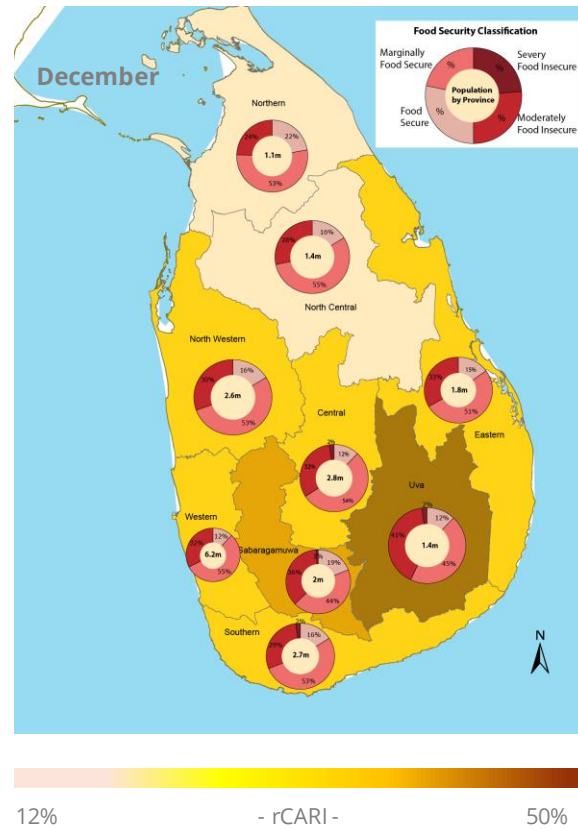
Thirty three percent of households are facing acute food insecurity² in December, which continues to be of concern. Food insecurity levels are observed to be fluctuating in the mid-thirties over the last four months. Compared to November, there was a marginal decrease in food insecurity levels of four percentage points in December. Severe food insecurity levels also reduced to 0.9 percent in December, a slight decrease from October and November levels.

Uva province reported the highest number of food insecure households for December, followed by Sabaragamuwa. Generally, there was a decrease in food insecurity in December in all provinces except in Western province, which saw an increase of three percentage points. In parallel, the highest number of households (72 percent) turning to food-based coping strategies were from the Western province.

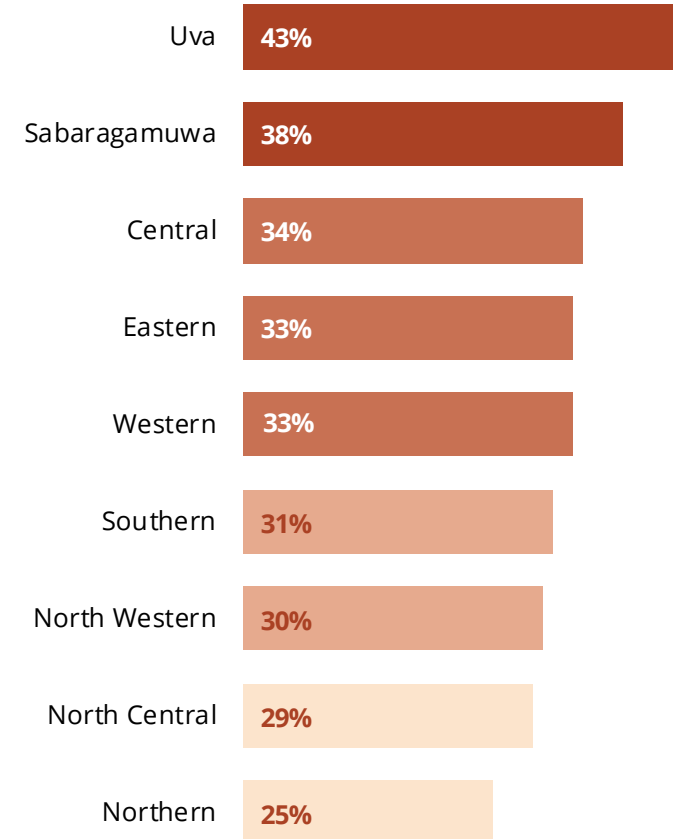
In December, Uva and Sabaragamuwa provinces had the highest percentage of households that are food insecure with an average of 41 percent.

Food insecurity stretches

wide across the country

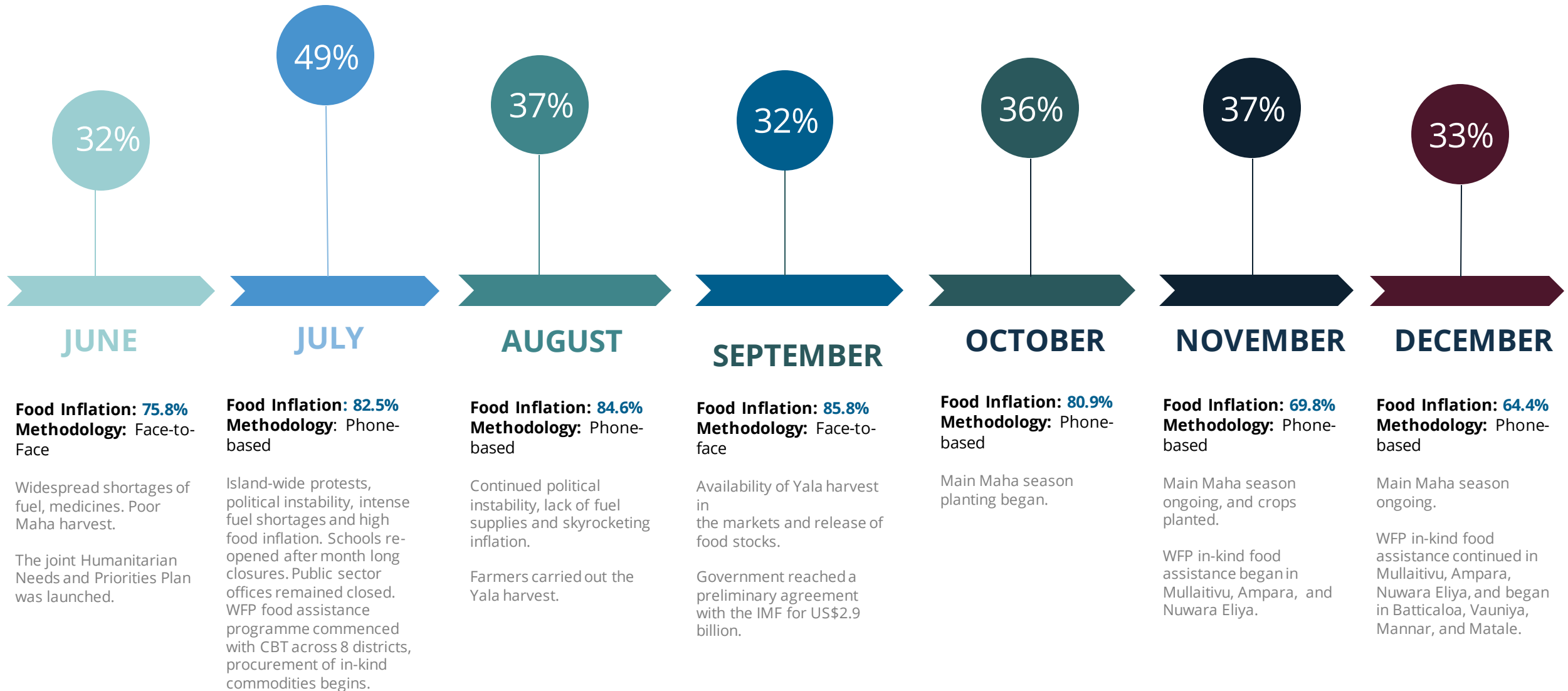


FOOD INSECURITY BY PROVINCE (%)



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

Food Insecurity over the months



Food insecurity reverberates across all facets of life.

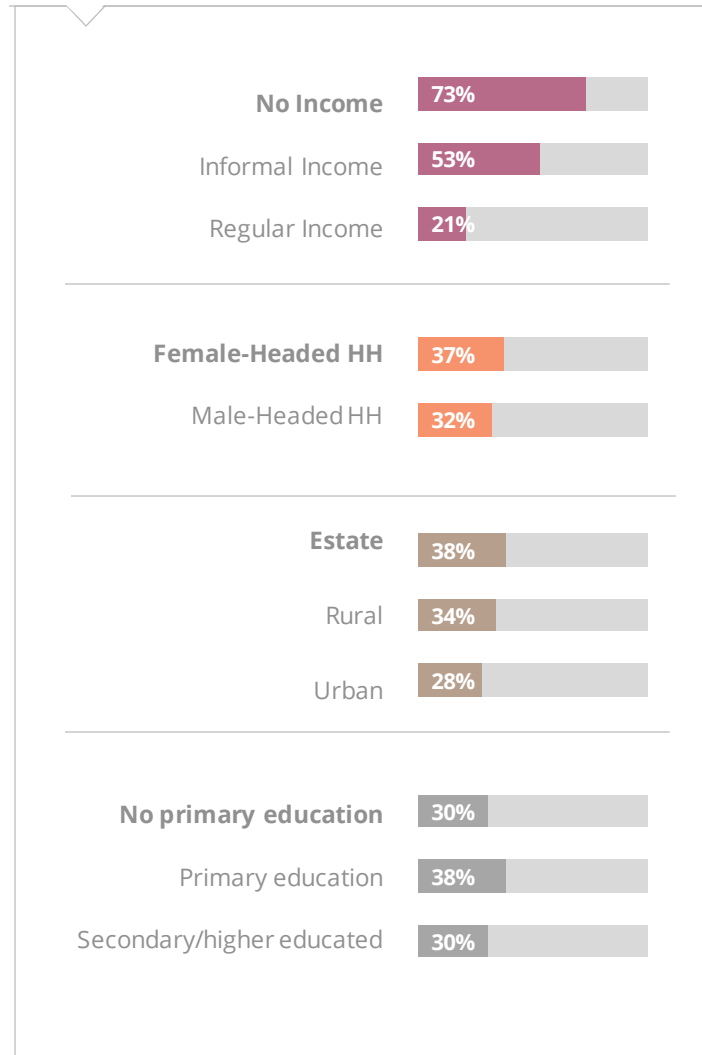
Households with no income and informal income continue to be the most food insecure. Seven in ten households without incomes and five in ten households with informal incomes are facing food insecurity. This is a sharp disparity compared to the two in ten households that have regular incomes.

Female-headed households continue to be more severely affected. In December, a five percentage point gap between female-headed and male-headed households was reported. The percentage of severely food insecure female-headed households (1.3 percent) is higher than male-headed households (0.8 percent).

Estate households fared worse than rural and urban households in December. In the last four months, except in November, the estate sector continuously showed high food insecurity than the rural and urban sectors. The estate sector situation improved in November due to improved daily income as a result of the good harvest obtained from the tea estates.

Households of varying education levels had distinctive divides in food security levels. Thirty eight percent of households with primary education were food insecure while those with no education and at least secondary level education were both at 30 percent.

FOOD INSECURITY BY HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS (%)



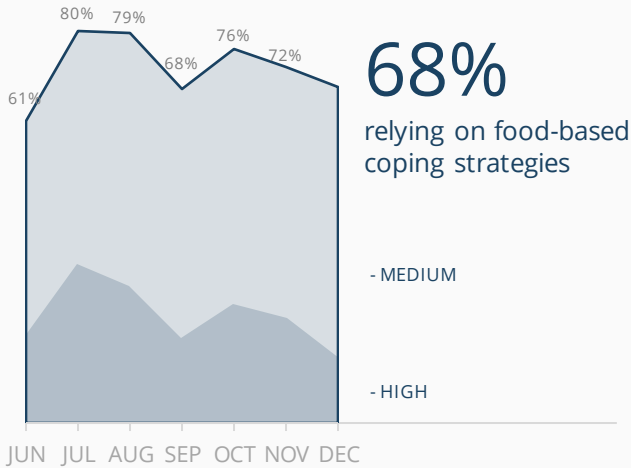
Over half of households are borrowing money to put food on the table.

Reliance on food-based coping strategies was reported by 68 percent of households in December, (compared to 72 percent in November), a slight decline but a continuation of the alarming trend observed since June. The use of negative coping strategies remains high, similar to results seen in July and August.




Eighty-five percent of households are turning to livelihood-based coping strategies, as a result, households are exceedingly minimizing their ability to cope with future shocks.

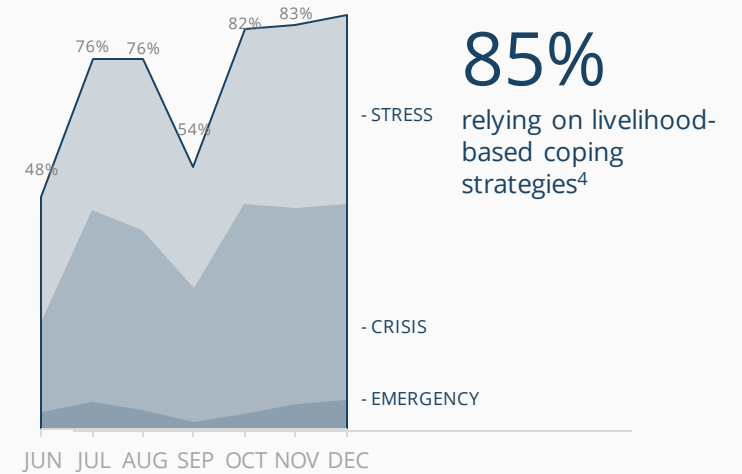
Reliance on livelihood coping strategies saw a slight increase in December when compared to November.

Fifty-eight percent of households purchased food on credit in December, compared to 60 percent in November while households that borrowed money to put food on the table increased from 52 percent in November to 53 percent in December.






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

-  67% are relying on less preferred food
-  43% are limiting portion sizes
-  35% are reducing the number of meals



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

-  53% borrowed money from a bank/lender (or pawned goods)
-  42% had to reduce spending on education and health
-  41% spent savings and/or skipped debt payments

⁴ This refers to emergency, crisis and stress livelihood-based coping strategies. The proportion relying on just emergency and crisis livelihood-based coping strategies is 47 percent.



Anxieties about food and fuel prices persist.

Food prices remain the most pressing concern in recent months; close to nine in ten households cited this as a worry. Concerns around fuel prices also persist, though not nearly as high, with 17 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.

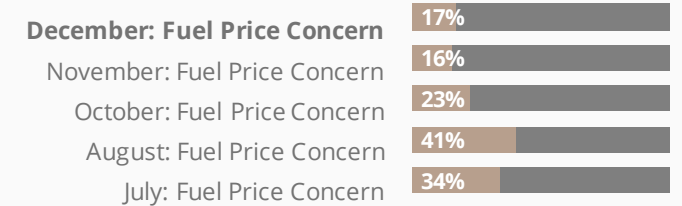
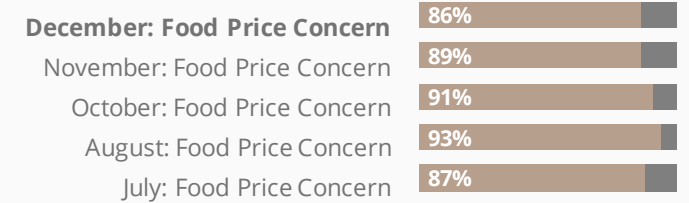
People are facing trouble accessing markets and food.

Almost nine 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. Almost nine in ten households reported concerns around food access in rural areas, closely followed by eight in ten households in estate areas.

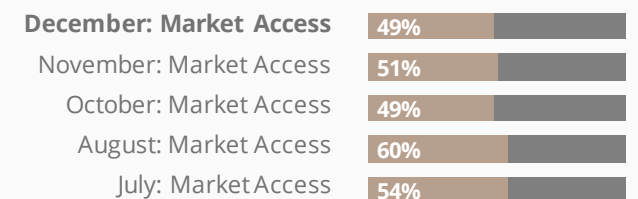
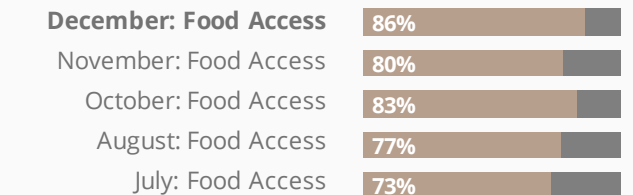
Slightly fewer households are reporting restrictions in accessing markets, coinciding with the limited restoration of fuel supplies. Households in estate areas are at the largest disadvantage in market access (69 percent), followed by urban (59 percent) and rural areas (46 percent).

CONCERNS AND ACCESS

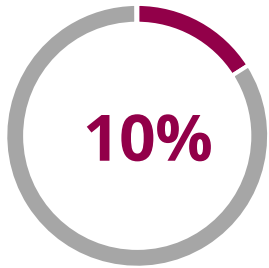
% WITH CONCERN



% WITH ACCESS ISSUES (LAST 14 DAYS)



Assistance preference

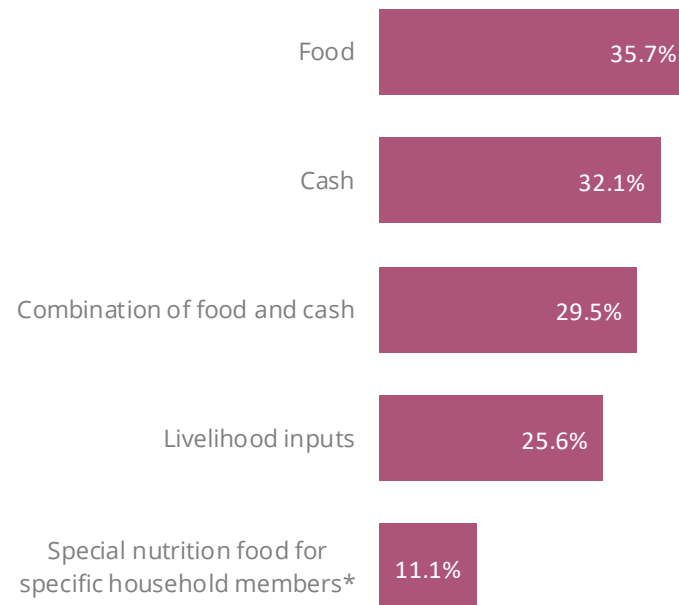


10% of households are receiving some form of assistance.

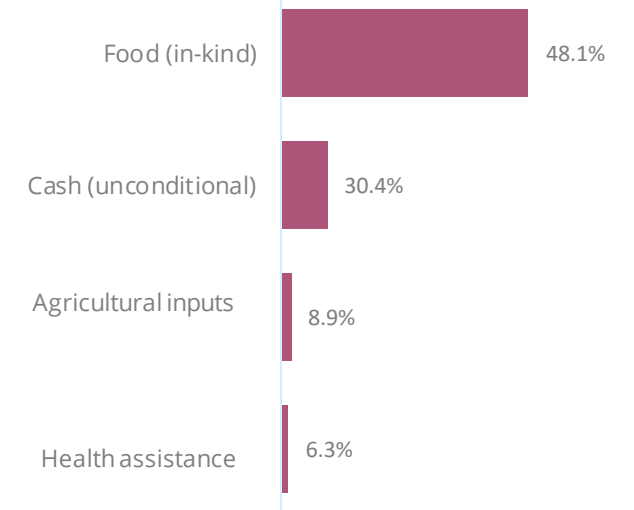
Ten percent of households reported having received some type of assistance in the last 30 days (either from government, NGO or UN agency) to help cope with the effects of the economic crisis. Among the assistance received, 48 percent was food (in-kind) and 30 percent of households reported receiving cash assistance.

In terms of assistance preference as a means of coping with the effects of the economic downturn, there was a marginal difference reported between cash and food. About 29 percent of households prefer receiving a combination of food and cash while 25 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

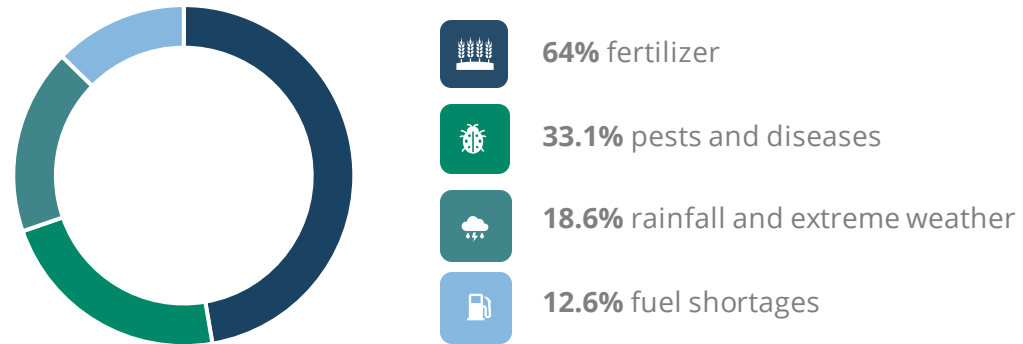
Agricultural Outlook

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

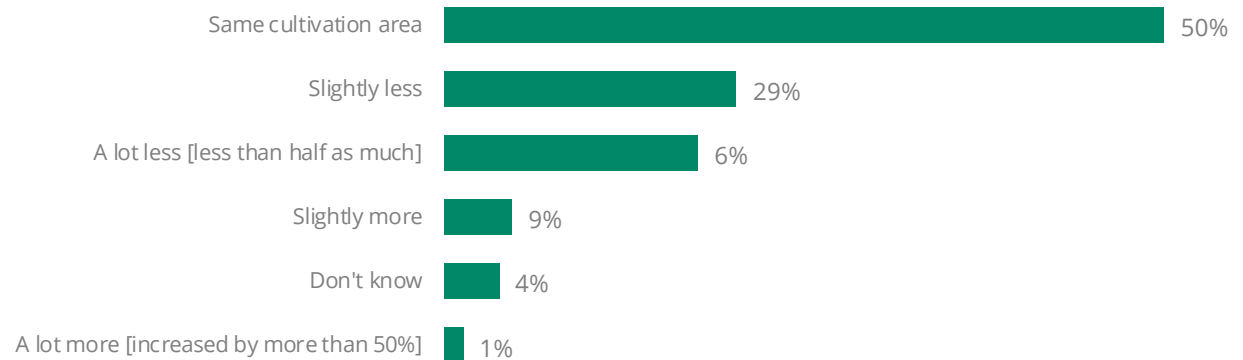
Fifty percent⁵ of farmers plan to cultivate the same area that they did during the previous Maha season (2021/22). Due to projected obstacles such as chemical fertilizer supply and cost, 29 percent of farmers reported that they intend to cultivate less area during this Maha season than they did during the previous season.



MAHA SEASON: KEY FARMER CHALLENGES



FARMER CULTIVATION PLANS FOR MAHA 2022/23



⁵ 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.⁶

The December round consisted of 2,137 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.⁷ December food security survey households were obtained from the face-to-face survey conducted in September (panel data set). 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.



⁶ 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

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

Annex: Tables

Overall

Food Insecurity (rCARI)	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Food Secure	20.1	10.9	16.0	20.5	11.7	13.4	14.8
Marginally Food Secure	48.4	39.7	47.5	47.9	52.3	50	52.3
Moderately Food Insecure	28.8	45.3	33.8	30.8	34.7	35.5	32
Severely Food Insecure	2.6	4.1	2.7	0.8	1.3	1.1	0.9

Livelihood-based Coping Strategies

None	52.3	23.8	23.7	45.9	17.9	16.8	14.7
Stress	25.1	31.1	35.1	24.9	35.8	37.7	38.8
Crisis	18.8	39.5	37.2	27.5	43.1	40.3	40.2
Emergency	3.7	5.6	3.9	1.7	3.2	5.2	6.3

Food-based Coping Strategies

No/Low	38.9	20.5	21.0	32.2	24.1	27.9	31.9
Medium	43.5	47.1	51.1	50.3	51.6	50.6	54.9
High	17.6	32.5	27.9	17.5	24.2	21.5	13.2

Food Consumption Group

Acceptable Food Consumption	60.9	46.9	60.4	68.9	64.8	65.2	70.2
Borderline Food Consumption	28.4	39.4	30.8	23.6	29.3	30	27.2
Poor Food Consumption	10.7	13.7	8.8	7.4	6.0	4.8	2.6

June values in these tables have been recalculated to ensure comparability on a remote CARI for comparability with July and onwards 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							
	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	
Food Insecurity (rCARI)																						
Food Secure	7.5	3.3	8.5	10.9	4.8	14.4	12.5	21.0	10.7	16.7	18.2	11.0	11.4	15.5	18.9	14.0	14.8	32.9	16.5	21.7	12.2	
Marginally Food Secure	47.3	43.1	40.8	52.8	51.8	52.2	49.6	48.3	40.1	49.1	48.5	53.0	49.7	50.9	49.4	37.3	42.2	44.0	49.5	50.8	59.4	
Moderately Food Insecure	43.3	50.0	46.1	35.3	41.3	32.9	36.8	28.3	44.9	31.7	32.5	34.9	37.4	32.6	27.1	45.8	40.0	22.2	31.9	27.5	28.4	
Severely Food Insecure	2.0	3.7	4.5	0.9	2.1	0.5	1.1	2.3	4.4	2.6	0.8	1.1	1.44	1.1	4.6	2.9	3.0	0.9	2.1	0.0	0.0	
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies																						
None	26.8	8.1	13.7	39.3	5.4	17.1	16.3	55.7	23.6	23.1	45.1	16.9	15.2	15.0	41.1	28.6	28.9	51.8	25.5	23.7	13.4	
Stress	30.7	48.9	53.2	25.7	43.1	56.3	37.4	23.2	32.7	35.3	23.7	37.1	37.6	39.3	34.5	19.5	29.8	29.5	28.2	33.6	36.9	
Crisis	36.7	40.5	25.0	28.9	42.6	19.0	25.1	17.7	38.3	38.7	30.1	44.0	41.6	40.9	19.2	44.4	34.0	16.1	39.2	39.8	40.5	
Emergency	5.8	2.6	8.1	6.1	8.9	7.6	21.1	3.4	5.4	2.9	1.1	2.0	5.6	4.8	5.2	7.5	7.3	2.6	7.1	2.9	9.2	
Food-based Coping Strategies																						
No/Low	20.9	14.9	17.6	37.7	23.7	26.5	35.5	38.8	21.0	21.9	30.9	24.2	28.1	33.0	45.6	19.3	17.8	35.3	23.8	27.3	25.9	
Medium	43.6	42.0	42.7	41.9	36.8	46.8	50.4	45.0	47.2	53.8	52.6	52.8	51.3	53.3	34.4	47.7	41.1	43.9	49.9	48.5	63.2	
High	35.4	43.1	39.7	20.4	39.5	26.7	14.1	16.2	31.7	24.3	16.4	23.0	20.7	13.7	20.0	33.0	41.1	20.8	26.3	24.1	10.9	
Food Consumption Group																						
Acceptable Food Consumption	62.4	49.2	43.6	61.0	58.9	57.9	68.6	59.6	46.1	62.0	67.4	64.0	64.0	68.6	67.7	49.7	57.0	77.8	69.4	72.5	77.7	
Borderline Food Consumption	28.4	41.3	45.9	32.6	34.9	39.7	24.9	30.1	39.9	29.1	24.9	30.1	31.2	28.7	18.6	37.0	34.8	15.5	23.9	22.3	19.9	
Poor Food Consumption	9.3	9.5	10.5	6.4	6.2	2.4	2.1	10.3	14.0	8.9	7.7	5.8	4.8	2.7	13.7	13.3	8.2	6.7	6.7	5.2	2.4	

By Sex of Head of Household

	Female-Headed HH							Male-Headed HH						
	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Food Insecurity (rCARI)														
Food Secure	13.0	7.2	12.6	16.3	10.1	11.8	15.2	21.6	11.7	16.7	21.4	12.1	13.7	14.7
Marginally Food Secure	42.6	39.4	41.7	43.8	46.1	46.7	48.1	49.6	39.8	48.7	48.9	53.8	50.8	53.2
Moderately Food Insecure	38.0	49.7	40.7	38.3	41.1	38.8	35.3	27.0	44.3	32.3	29.1	33.2	34.7	31.3
Severely Food Insecure	6.4	3.8	5.0	1.5	2.8	2.7	1.3	1.9	4.2	2.3	0.7	1.0	0.8	0.82
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies														
None	46.9	26.7	28.8	49.6	19.1	20.1	19.1	53.4	23.2	22.7	45.1	17.7	16.0	13.8
Stress	23.2	29.4	28.3	19.6	34.7	36.7	41.0	25.5	31.4	36.5	26.1	36.0	38.0	38.3
Crisis	23.1	39.0	36.8	28.4	43.5	37.1	33.1	17.9	39.6	37.3	27.2	43.0	41.0	41.6
Emergency	6.8	4.9	6.1	2.5	2.7	6.2	6.7	3.1	5.8	3.5	1.6	3.3	5.0	6.2
Food-based Coping Strategies														
No/Low	31.7	15.2	18.0	26.3	22.5	23.5	33.3	40.4	21.6	21.7	33.5	24.5	28.9	31.6
Medium	43.8	46.5	40.3	53.9	49.3	47.8	50.5	43.4	47.2	53.4	49.5	52.5	51.2	55.8
High	24.5	38.3	41.6	19.8	28.2	28.7	16.2	16.2	31.2	25.0	17.0	23.3	19.9	12.6
Food Consumption Group														
Acceptable Food Consumption	51.7	45.4	51.3	62.9	56.7	63.0	63.3	62.8	47.2	62.3	70.3	66.6	65.7	71.6
Borderline Food Consumption	32.6	35.9	36.6	26.4	34.4	27.4	32.7	27.5	40.2	29.5	23.0	28.1	30.6	26
Poor Food Consumption	15.7	18.7	12.1	10.8	8.9	9.6	4.1	9.7	12.6	8.1	6.7	5.3	3.7	2.3

By Income Source

	None						Informal						Regular					
	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Food Insecurity (rCARI)																		
Food Secure	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.8	3.7	3.8	3.6	2.6	4.8	15.7	22.1	32.3	16.3	19.4	20.5
Marginally Food Secure	13.5	17.6	31.2	25.2	28.4	26.6	26.3	34.8	41.5	38.7	38.1	42.2	47.4	54.7	53.2	60.6	57.3	58.8
Moderately Food Insecure	67.1	65.6	59.3	61.5	62.9	62.8	62.0	55.9	53.7	55.6	57.0	51.4	36.4	22.6	14.4	23.0	23.3	20.7
Severely Food Insecure	19.4	16.8	9.5	13.3	8.7	10.6	9.8	5.7	0.9	2.1	2.26	1.5	0.6	0.6	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies																		
None	31.3	47.0	49.2	19.4	26.8	23.3	16.4	18.3	43.5	15.6	9.5	15.3	26.6	24.4	47.2	18.9	19.3	13.9
Stress	31.6	20.1	17.6	34.4	25.6	32.9	28.6	36.8	24.7	36.7	34.7	34.4	32.1	35.4	25.6	35.5	40.1	41.2
Crisis	28.5	22.0	29.6	40.2	40.8	34.7	47.2	41.3	29.1	43.4	47.7	40.1	36.8	36.6	26.3	43.2	36.9	40.6
Emergency	8.6	10.9	3.7	6.0	6.9	9.2	7.8	3.6	2.7	4.4	8.1	10.2	4.5	3.6	1.0	2.4	3.7	4.3
Food-based Coping Strategies																		
No/Low	7.7	8.4	20.5	18.4	16.4	31.1	10.6	16.1	24.1	19.0	20.1	25.9	25.7	23.9	38.1	26.9	32.4	34.8
Medium	41.9	36.6	49.3	48.2	35.2	47.7	48.9	48.0	52.9	51.1	51.0	53.3	46.6	53.3	48.9	52.2	51.7	56.1
High	50.4	54.9	30.2	33.4	48.4	21.3	40.5	35.9	23.0	29.9	28.9	20.8	27.7	22.8	13.1	21.0	15.9	9.1
Food Consumption Group																		
Acceptable Food Consumption	30.9	30.3	54.0	52.1	54.5	54.9	36.9	48.2	58.4	57.1	58.9	63.8	52.3	67.4	76.6	69.2	69.0	74.2
Borderline Food Consumption	48.3	55.9	28.4	35.1	35.9	34.5	44.6	35.5	30.9	36.1	34.0	32	36.6	27.2	18.8	25.7	27.7	24.4
Poor Food Consumption	20.9	13.8	17.6	12.9	9.7	10.6	18.5	16.2	10.7	12.9	7.1	4.2	11.1	5.5	4.6	5.1	3.3	1.4

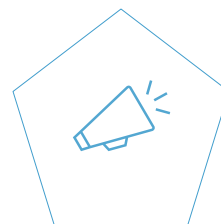
Annex: Resources

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.



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