



LAO PDR

FOOD SECURITY MONITORING

DECEMBER/JANUARY
2023

Remote Household Food
Security Survey Brief



Lao PDR: IN NUMBERS



One in seven households are currently food-insecure



13%

OF PEOPLE ARE FOOD-INSECURE (rCARI)¹

People are relying on coping strategies mostly to buy food



61%

RESORTING TO COPING STRATEGIES
**Livelihood-based coping strategies*



40% spent savings



14% reduced expenses on health



18% borrowed money

Food security varies across different parts of society



16%

of households in rural areas are food-insecure, compared with 6 percent of those in urban areas.



23%

of households headed by people with no education are food-insecure, compared with 7 percent of those headed by people with secondary education



¹ Remote Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Insecurity (CARI).





In Brief

About one in seven households in Lao PDR are food insecure (13 percent).¹ The trajectory of the food security situation remains uncertain and is likely to worsen with the lean season approaching due to the seasonal low levels of household food stock. Inflation rose from 38 percent in November to 39 percent in December 2022.² Additional monitoring of the situation in the coming months will remain crucial to informing action.

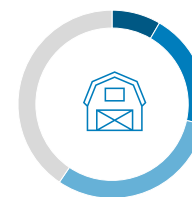
Food insecurity is affecting different parts of the country unequally. In some districts, around 25 percent of households are food-insecure, while in others, 4 percent of households are food-insecure. Prevalence of high food insecurity is notable in Sekong (25 percent) and Louangnamtha 23 percent. Just like the previous rounds, rural areas are more food-insecure (16 percent) than those in urban areas (6 percent).

Households with low education levels are especially affected. Households headed by someone with no education were three times likely to experience food insecurity (23 percent) compared to households headed by someone with secondary education or higher (7 percent).

More than half of the population is engaging in coping strategies in order to meet their food needs and other essential needs. There is little difference in the populations using coping strategies in December/January compared to November/December. Approximately 61 percent of the households are resorting to livelihood-based coping strategies, with the majority of these households, 35 percent, engaging in stress coping strategies, followed by 17 percent engaging in crisis related coping strategies and 9 percent employing emergency coping strategies. There has been a gradual increase in the proportion employing emergency coping strategies. The heavy reliance on coping strategies by households in Lao PDR is alarming, and indicates households' diminishing ability to respond to different shocks in the future.

Just like in the previous months, people are worried about food price increases. However, there is an increase in the number of households that are generally worried about loss of livelihood sources and jobs.

More than half of the population is using coping strategies



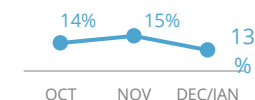
61%

RESORTING TO LIVELIHOOD-BASED COPING STRATEGIES



13%

FOOD-INSECURE (rCARI)



1. This December 2022/January 2023 figure is based on a remote Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security (rCARI). More detail on the CARI is available [here](#).

2. [Laos Inflation Rate - December 2022 Data - 1989-2021 Historical - January Forecast \(tradingeconomics.com\)](#)

3. https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Digital_ASEAN_FNSR_Volume-1_21-4-2022_FINAL.pdf

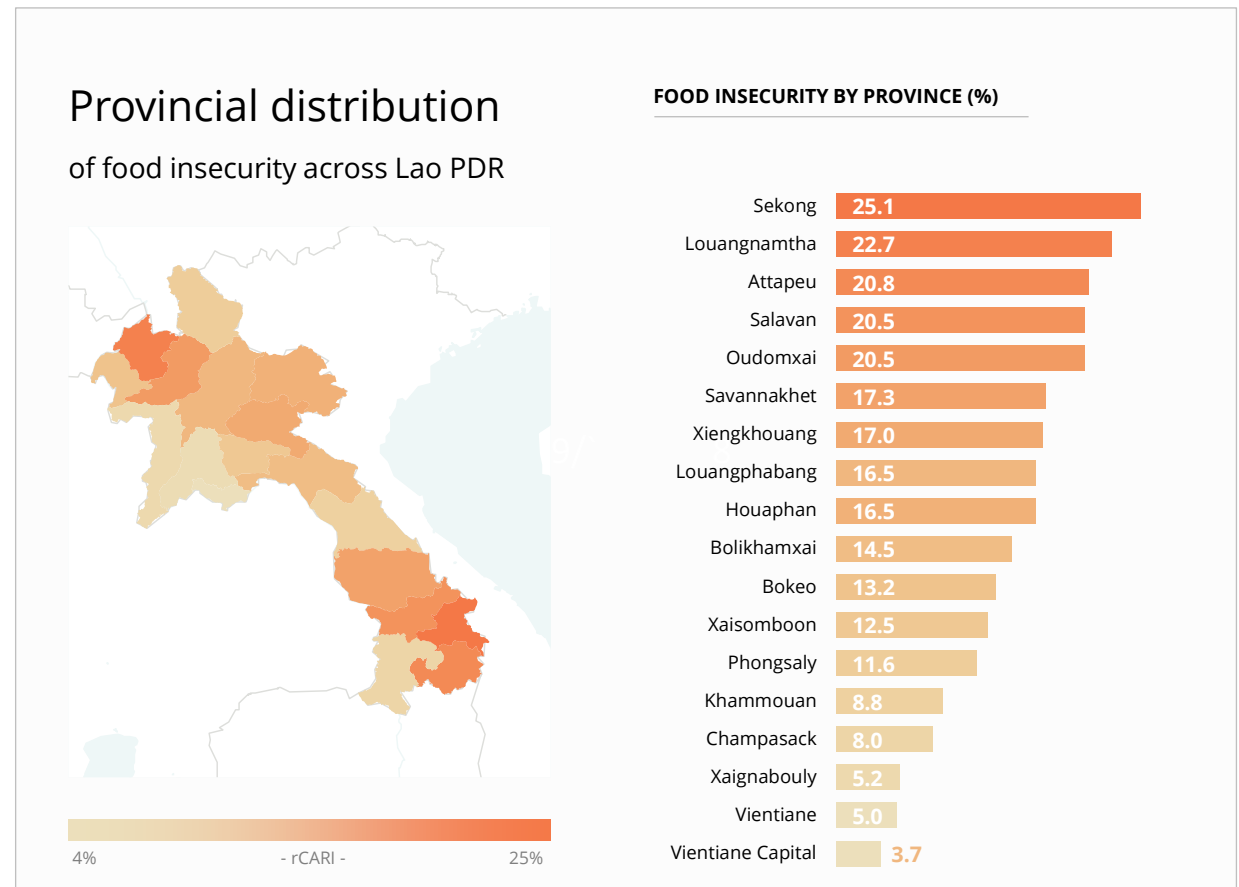


Findings

Similar to the previous rounds, almost one-seventh of the population (13 percent) is experiencing acute food insecurity. Just like the previous rounds, the majority of these food-insecure households are at moderate levels of food insecurity, with a very small proportion facing severe levels (1 percent).

Food insecurity varies greatly across provinces. Sekong now has the highest prevalence of food insecurity, rising from fourth highest in November. Louangnamtha and Attapeu provinces remain in the top three with the highest prevalence of food insecurity (between 23 and 25 percent), despite seeing a slight improvement compared with November. There was a notable improvement in Houaphan, from 24 percent to 17 percent. The lowest levels of food insecurity are reported in Vientiane Capital (4 percent), Vientiane (5 percent) and Xaignabouly (5 percent) provinces.

Households in rural areas are more vulnerable to food insecurity compared to their urban counterparts. A higher percentage of households in rural areas are food-insecure (16 percent) compared to those in urban areas (6 percent), a slight decrease was observed from the November/December





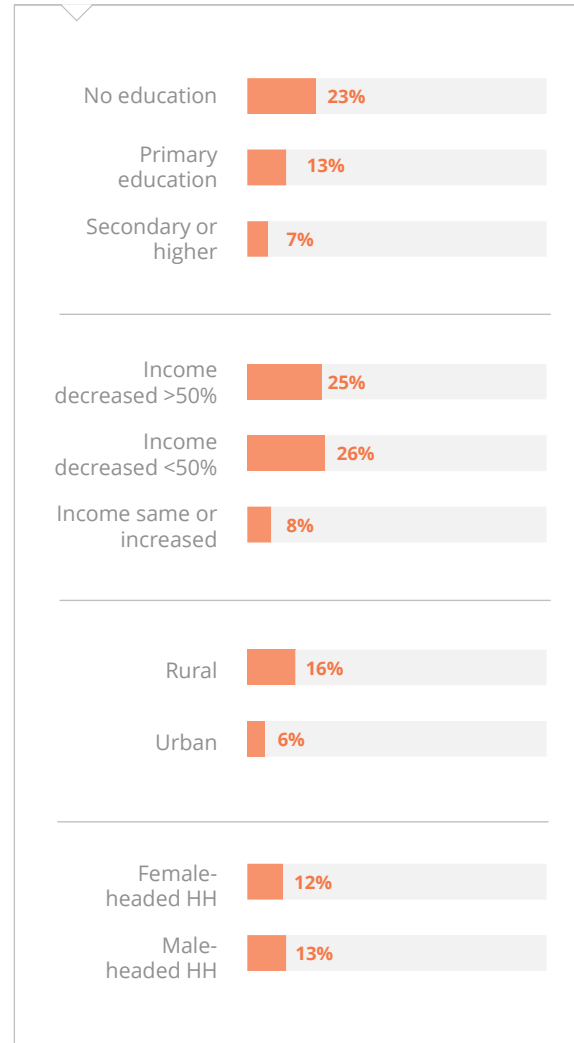
Food insecurity varies among different parts of society.

Family income determines a household's consumption pattern. Therefore, households experiencing a deterioration in income are particularly affected. Households that had a reduction in the sources of income (reduction of < 50 percent or > 50 percent) were likely to be more food insecure compared to households whose income remained the same or increased (8 percent). This is because households have limited economic resources to access food, even if food is available on the market, it might be difficult for some households to acquire it.

Education is another important element of food security outcomes. Among the food insecure households, majority of the household heads with no education struggled to ensure household food security (23 percent) compared to households headed by someone with secondary or higher education (7 percent). However, the gap was not wide as compared to the November/December round.

Households with medium (18 percent) to high (11 percent) dependency ratio were likely to be more food insecure compared to households with a low (4 percent) dependency ratio. A high dependency ratio, is likely to create a burden to the active members of the family to feed the household.

DEC/JAN FOOD INSECURITY BY HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS (%)



4. Dependency ratio is calculated as the ratio of non-working-age members (i.e., children, elderly) to working-age members in a household.

Nearly one in five households are not consuming adequate diets.

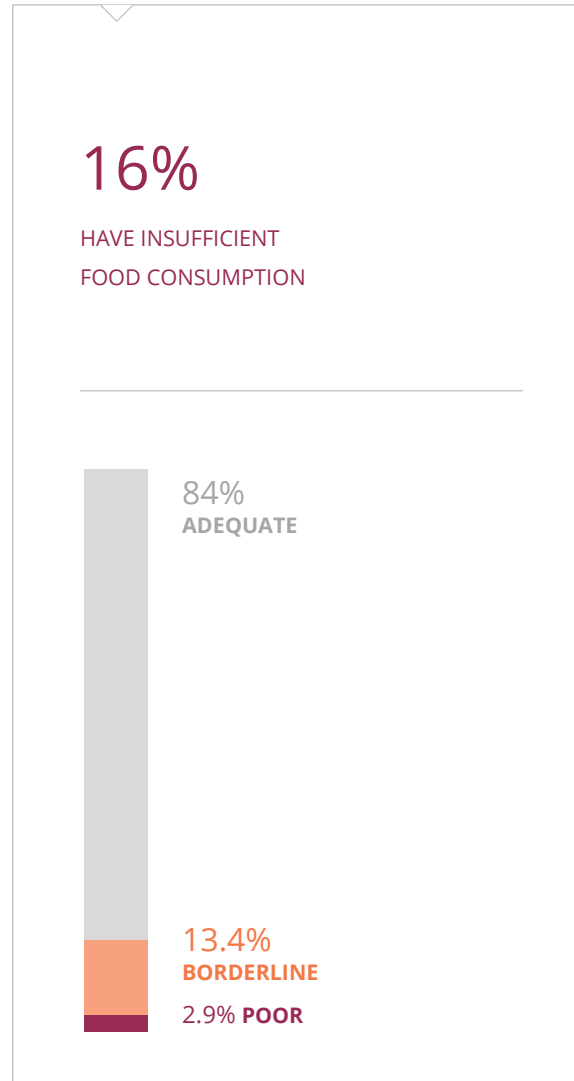
Overall, the food consumption levels have slightly improved compared to November, with 16 percent of households having poor and borderline consumption levels.

In seven days, the average household recalled eating staples daily, and vegetables and animal proteins six times a week. The high consumption of vegetables and animal protein could be attributed to a high consumption of wild vegetables and a high prevalence of hunting in some parts of the country.

Rural dwellers are consuming less diverse diets (20 percent) compared to urban dwellers (8 percent).⁵ In general, the consumption of dairy and pulses is very low, with the average household consuming each food type less than twice a week.

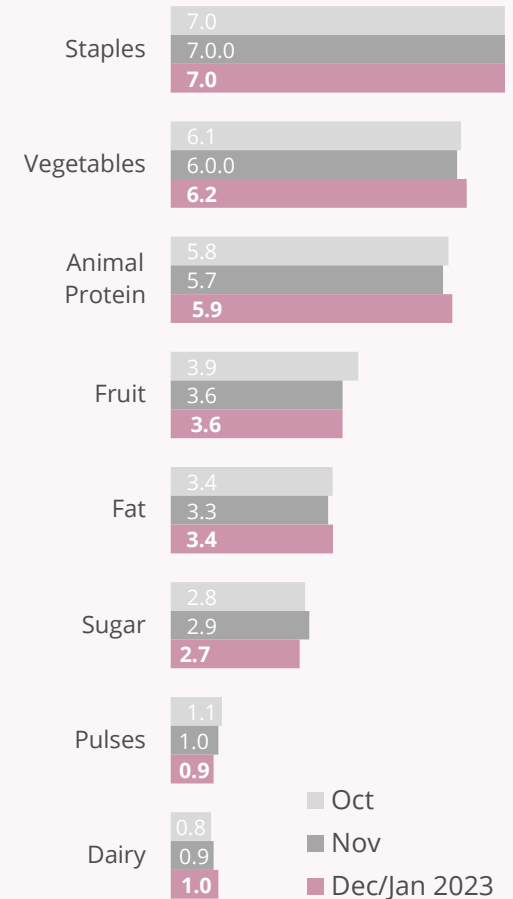


FOOD CONSUMPTION GROUP



FOOD CONSUMPTION

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



5. The 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.



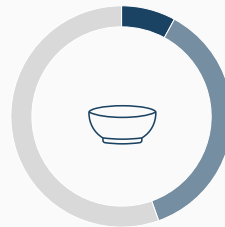
Large portions of the population are still adopting coping strategies.

There is no major difference in the proportion of households adopting livelihood-based coping strategies compared to November. However, there is a slight improvement in the proportion of households engaging in emergency and crisis coping strategies in recent months.

Six in ten households are relying on livelihood-based coping strategies such as spending savings, cutting health expenditure or borrowing in order to buy food or meet other essential needs. This was most pronounced in Sekong, Oudomxay, and Sekong provinces.

Like the previous months, households in rural areas are more likely to adopt livelihood-based coping strategies (potential disadvantages with these coping strategies) than those in urban areas (57 percent). In addition, high use of livelihood coping strategies is prevalent among some provinces with high food insecurity.

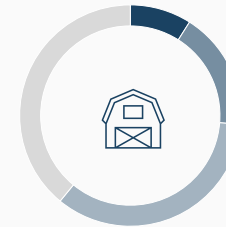
One in four households (44 percent) are relying on food-based coping strategies - the same as the months of November/December. These included consuming less preferred food, limiting portion sizes, or sacrificing adult meals so that children can eat.



44%

relying on **food-based** coping strategies

■ High ■ Medium ■ Low/No






61%




relying on **livelihood-based** coping strategies

■ Emergency ■ Crisis ■ Stress ■ None

STRATEGIES EMPLOYED IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS BECAUSE OF A LACK OF MONEY OR FOOD IN DECEMBER/JANUARY

-  50% are relying on less preferred food
-  18% are limiting portion sizes
-  18% have adults sacrificing meals so children can eat

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

-  40% spent savings
-  14% reduced expenses on health
-  18% borrowed money

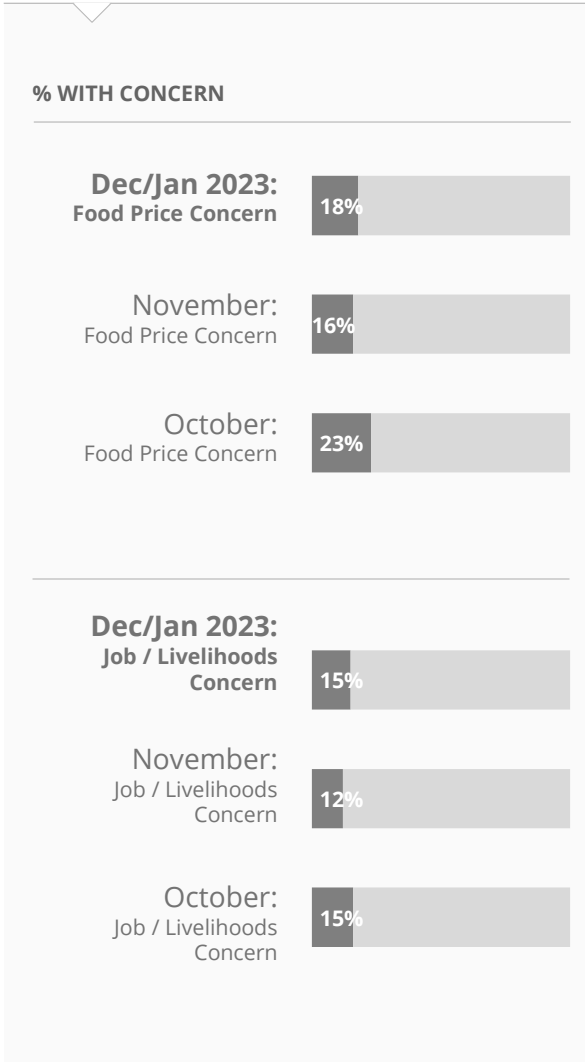


People remain most concerned about food prices and disruption of livelihood sources and jobs.

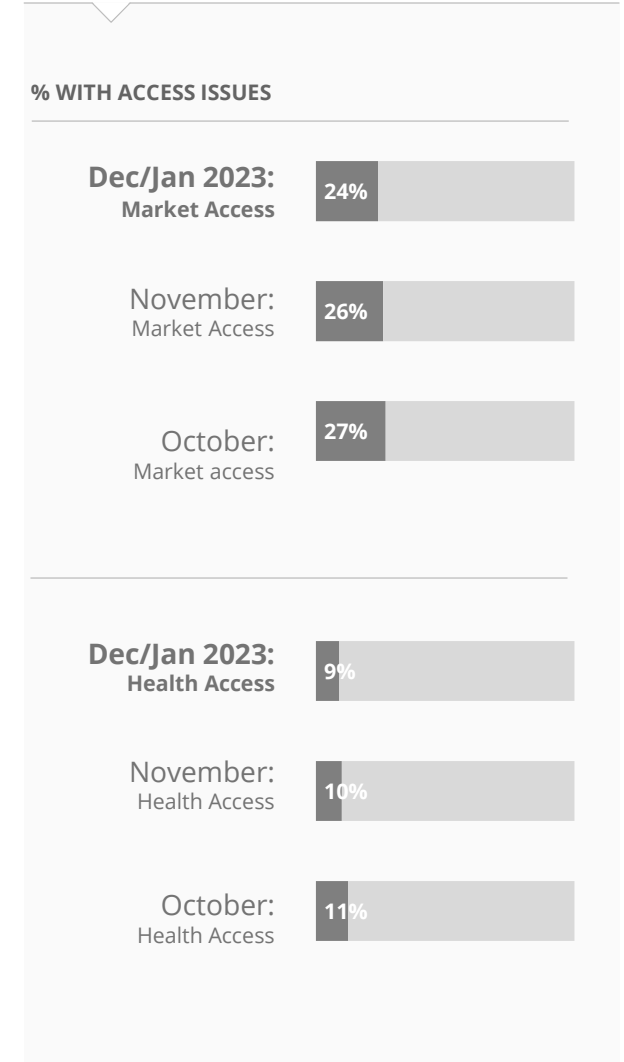
Increase in food prices is still a top concern. Almost one in five households (18 percent) cited this as their top concern, which is a slight increase compared to November/December. Just like the previous months, approximately 15 percent of the households have raised concerns about loss of jobs/livelihoods.

Concerns about food prices are higher in urban areas. About 24 percent of the households in urban areas concerned about the food prices compared to 16 percent in rural areas.

CONCERNS



ACCESS





Background and Methodology

Lao PDR's inflation rate is one of the highest within Southeast Asia.^{7, 8} The cumulative effects from COVID-19's socio-economic impacts and the global food crisis have exposed Lao PDR to macroeconomic instability, heightened financial risks, and negative trends in state expenditure.

The price hikes are likely to have an outsized impact on households that mostly depend on markets as a source of food. These rising fuel and food prices are undermining household purchasing power – impacting the quality and quantity of households' diets, and threatening the country's food and nutrition security.

Amid this context, WFP is rolling out household food security surveys through mobile vulnerability analysis and mapping (mVAM). These remote surveys use a phone-based (CATI) methodology to understand the changes in the food security situation and underlying factors across the country. The December/January 2023 round consisted of 1,591 surveys across all 18 provinces. The final results are weighted to ensure that results for provinces are statistically representative.

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



Other Resources



ECONOMIC EXPLORER

An overview of prices across different markets (Select Lao PDR)



COUNTRY BRIEFS

A monthly overview of WFP's activities in Lao PDR, including situational and operational updates

7. *Trading economics*

8. *Consumer Price Index, Lao PDR General Directorate of Statistics*

Annex: Tables

Overall

| Food Insecurity (rCARI) | OVERALL |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Food Secure | 44 |
| Marginally Food Secure | 44 |
| Moderately Food Insecure | 12 |
| Severely Food Insecure | 1 |

Livelihood-based Coping Strategies

| | |
|-----------|----|
| None | 39 |
| Stress | 35 |
| Crisis | 17 |
| Emergency | 9 |

Food-based Coping Strategies

| | |
|--------|----|
| No/Low | 56 |
| Medium | 37 |
| High | 8 |

Food Consumption Group

| | |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Acceptable Food Consumption | 84 |
| Borderline Food Consumption | 13 |
| Poor Food Consumption | 3 |

Annex: Tables

| | Education | | | Residence | |
|---|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| | NONE | PRIMARY | HIGHER | RURAL | URBAN |
| Food Insecurity (rCARI) | | | | | |
| Food Secure | 27 | 44 | 52 | 39 | 53 |
| Marginally Food Secure | 50 | 43 | 41 | 45 | 40 |
| Moderately Food Insecure | 21 | 12 | 7 | 15 | 6 |
| Severely Food Insecure | 2 | 1 | - | 1 | - |
| Livelihood-based Coping Strategies | | | | | |
| None | 34 | 39 | 42 | 37 | 44 |
| Stress | 32 | 34 | 37 | 35 | 34 |
| Crisis | 21 | 19 | 14 | 19 | 14 |
| Emergency | 14 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 9 |
| Food-based Coping Strategies | | | | | |
| No/Low | 39 | 53 | 68 | 51 | 66 |
| Medium | 47 | 40 | 27 | 41 | 28 |
| High | 14 | 7 | 5 | 9 | 6 |
| Food Consumption Group | | | | | |
| Acceptable Food Consumption | 74 | 83 | 90 | 80 | 92 |
| Borderline Food Consumption | 21 | 14 | 9 | 17 | 7 |
| Poor Food Consumption | 5 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 1 |

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World Food Programme

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