

Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment in Armenia Round 3, December 2021



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food security analysis

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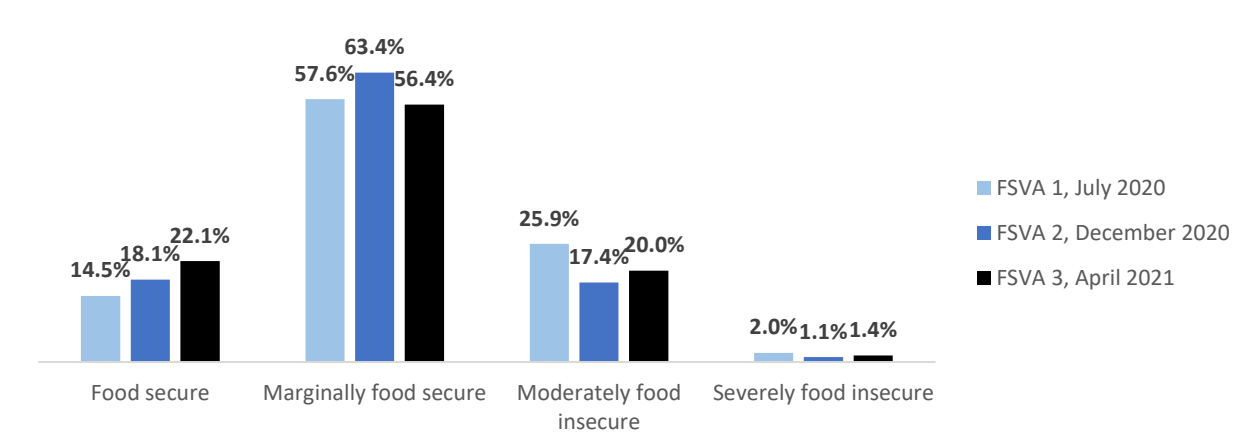
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Executive Summary

Food Security and Vulnerability Assessments (FSVA) in Armenia track the food security situation in the country and were initiated following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the Nagorno Karabakh (NK) conflict. This is the third FSVA assessment. It was carried out in all regions of Armenia and took place from February through April 2021.

The results of the FSVA 3 show that 21.4 percent of households are food insecure in Armenia. An additional 56.4 percent of surveyed households are marginally food secure suggesting that more than half of the population are at risk of becoming food insecure in the event of a shock or a crisis. Only 1 out of 5 households (22.1 percent) in Armenia are categorized as food secure. Compared to December 2021, food insecurity levels have increased by 2.9 percentage points. The main driver behind the increased food insecurity in April 2021 is household income disruption with 21.6 percent of households not having any income source and being dependent on assistance.

Figure ES.1. Comprehensive food security comparison

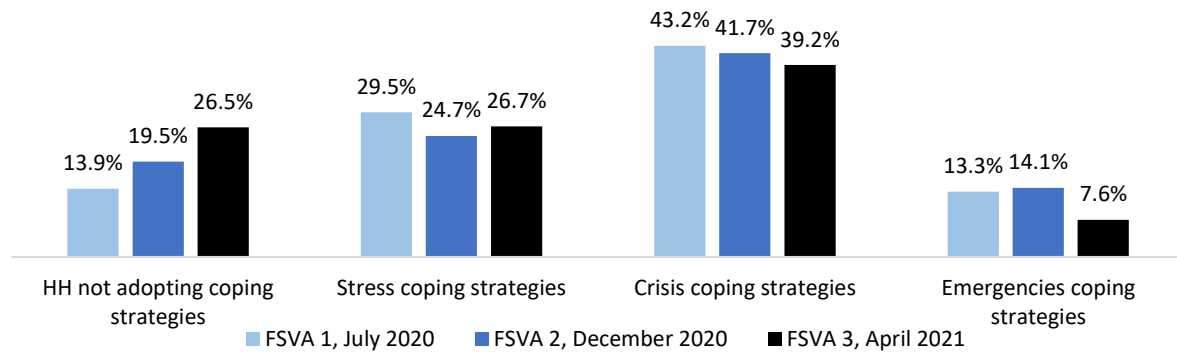


The FSVA 3 results show that northern regions and households headed by women, low-income households as well as lower educated households are proportionately more exposed to food insecurity. The regional food security analysis show that Tavush (31 percent), Lori (29 percent), Shirak (28 percent), and Gegharkunik (26 percent) are the most food-insecure regions in Armenia while regional cities and rural areas are more food insecure compared to Yerevan. Comparisons of inter-household differences in food security status show that female-headed households are 30 percent more likely to be food insecure than male-headed households. In addition, the higher monthly income of household, 192,000 AMD and above, the higher the food security level of households. Other factors found to positively influence food security in Armenia include higher education of household head, owning their house, and not being a household comprised of only elderly.

In April 2021, 3 out of 4 households (73.5 percent) in Armenia adopted livelihood coping strategies to access food while 1 out of 2 households (46.8 percent) adopted crisis or emergency livelihood coping strategies to access food. Livelihood coping strategies measure the longer-term household coping capacities. The most common coping strategies used are spending

savings (46 percent), reducing non-food expenditure on health and education (33 percent), purchasing food on credit (32 percent), and borrowing money (29 percent). Adoption of emergency coping strategies was particularly high among households from rural areas (15 percent) and households with a monthly income of less than 48,000 AMD (15 percent). Households with a head not having a higher education were more than twice as likely to adopt coping strategies.

Figure ES.2. Livelihood Coping Strategy Index



The FSV 3 also shows that 1 out of 2 (47.9) percent of households applied reduced coping strategies. As opposed to livelihood coping strategies, reduced coping strategies measure the immediate (in the past seven days) actions households apply when they have difficulties meeting their food need and include relying on less expensive food, borrowing food, limiting portions, reducing consumption by adults, reducing number of meals. 16.9 percent of households adopted severe reduced coping strategies and at the regional level, the highest application of severe coping was reported in Lori (21.6 percent), Gegharkunik (21.2 percent), and Tavush (20.7 percent) regions.

Recommendation 1: Invest in sustainable development programs targeting food insecure and marginally food secure people

The COVID-19 pandemic and the NK conflict negatively impacted livelihoods, resilience (e.g. using coping strategies to access food) and food security of many Armenians. However, the FSV analysis also point to an underlying structural problem driving food insecurity in Armenia. It is recommended to invest in sustainable development programs such as social protection and resilience creating programs targeted at food insecure and marginally food insecure people. Geographically, increased attention should be given to northern regions while targeting of households should pay particular attention to low-income households, female headed households, households who do not own their housing as well as lower educated households.

The alarming food security status in Armenia is also reflected in household finance and food access indicators. In April 2021, 32.4 percent of households ran out of food and 21.5 percent had to skip one or more meals because there was not enough money or other resources to get

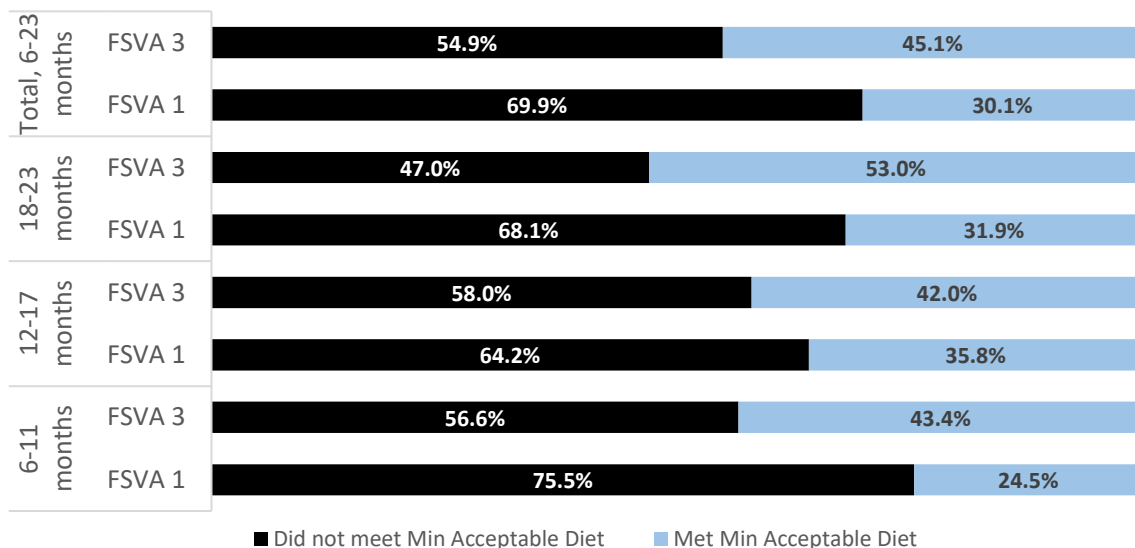
food. Likewise, 32.0 percent of household reported not having access to grocery stores. In April 2021, 3 out 4 (73.5 percent) households, who did not have access to grocery stores, reported lack of financial resources as being the primary reason compared to only 1 out 2 (51.3 percent) in December 2020.

Recommendation 2: Increase understanding of linkages between food insecurity and poverty

Food insecurity in Armenia is undeniably linked to financial hardship and during difficult times, households are forced to prioritize between fulfilling various pressing needs such as access to food, health services, medicine etc. It is recommended to further examine the linkages between food insecurity and poverty to be able to best support vulnerable households in Armenia.

The FSVA 3 results also shed light on the quality of diet of Armenian households which is particularly worrying for children; only 45.1 percent of children between 6 and 23 months meet the minimum Acceptable Diet (MAD) requirements. The assessment finds that 17.1 percent of households in Armenia did not consume any iron-rich food during the previous 7 days while 2.0 percent did not consume any protein rich food and 2.5 percent did not consume Vitamin A-rich food. FSVA 3 results also show that only 45.1. percent of 6-23 months of children met the minimum acceptable diet. While this is 15.0 percentage points higher compared to the score during the summer in 2020, this number remain alarmingly high. This percentage is comparatively higher among 18–23-month-old children (53.0 percent), whereas for 6–17-month-old children only between 42 and 44 percent of children met the acceptable level of diet.

Figure ES.3. Minimum Acceptable Diet (MAD) for children



Recommendation 3: Increase understanding of and efforts to promote nutritious diets of young children (6 to 23 months) in Armenia

The FSVA analyses show concerning rates of poor quality of diets at household level and in particular among young children (6 to 23 months). It is recommended to carry out root cause analyses to understand the drivers of poor diets in Armenia to best design targeted activities to promote nutritious diets. Examples of such activities could include developing and implementing targeted social and behaviour change campaigns and trainings, ensuring nutritious food is available and affordable in markets as well strengthening of referral mechanisms from social protection and other programmes to nutrition promoting programmes.

The FSVA 3 shows that the primary concern of Armenian households relates to the external and internal political situation. The most common concerns among interviewed households are the external political and security situation of the country (27.2 percent), financial hardships due to loss of job, livelihood source (16.1 percent), while the internal political situation, economic and social problems (16.0 percent) is the third most common concern.

Recommendation 4: Establish robust early warning systems

The FSVA analyses show that more than half of Armenian households are at risk of becoming food insecure if a shock hits or when they run out of coping options. Furthermore, the alarming rates of poor diets among small children highlights the need to react now to ensure the full potential of children in Armenia is reached. It is recommended to establish robust early warning systems in Armenia to inform programme and policy makers on the future needs of the Armenian population allowing a reaction prior to a situation becomes a crisis.

1 Background

Food Security and Vulnerability Assessments (FSVAs) in Armenia track food security in the country among local population and were initiated following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the Nagorno Karabakh (NK) post-conflict situation. The Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) conflict escalated outside Armenia in September-November 2020, which resulted in an inflow of displaced people to Armenia. The post-conflict situation and the ongoing crisis have affected local and regional food systems with substantial consequences on people's access to food.

This assessment was conducted among local population in all the regions of Armenia. FSVA findings inform Republic of Armenia (RA) Government about the food security level in the country and are used to design emergency and development programmes targeting food insecure populations in the country.

FSVA3 provides a baseline to WFP to compare food security among Armenian nationals with FSVA2 of the same study, conducted in November-December 2020, and the study carried out in June-July 2020. It aims at contributing to the evidence base for emergency response planning, targeting as well as prioritizing of actions for relevant stakeholders. The WFP Armenia contracted R-Insights Research Company for the implementation of assessments.

2 Methodology

2.1 Research objective and questions

The objective of this study was to establish an evidence base with a specific focus on food security on a national level for the Government of Armenia, WFP Armenia Country Office, local and international partners to plan response with appropriate targeting and prioritization. Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment (FSVA) in Armenia aims at tracking food security in the country among local population caused by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the Nagorno Karabakh (NK) post-conflict situation. The Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) conflict escalated outside Armenia in September-November 2020, which resulted in an inflow of displaced people to Armenia. The post-conflict situation and the ongoing crisis have affected local and regional food systems with substantial consequences on people's access to food. These consequences have triggered the

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