

AFGHANISTAN SPECIAL REPORT: Pre-Harvest Assessment

June 2014

The grain harvest is likely to be above average for the third year in row

KEY MESSAGES

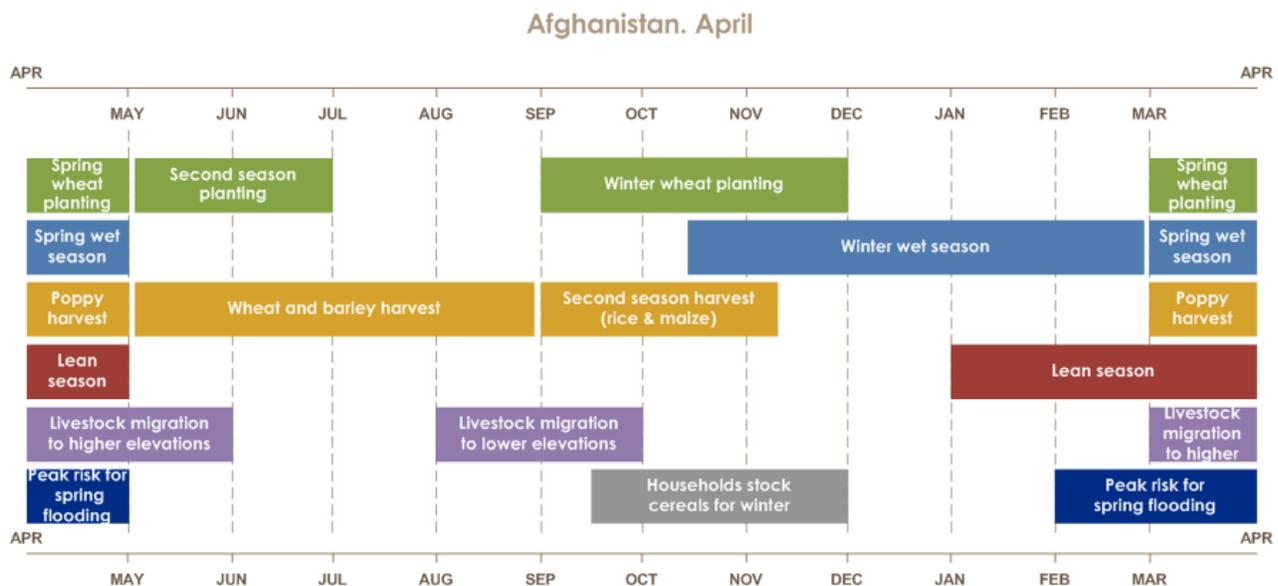
- Despite below-average October to May cumulative precipitation, steady spring rainfall supported wheat growth. This is likely to result in a grain harvest larger than in either of the previous two years. The harvest will supply grain both for household stocks and for markets.
- Despite higher agricultural production than usual, some households have faced shocks that have caused them to currently be acutely food insecure. These will include the newly displaced, flood-affected households, and households who lost orchard crops to frost.
- The recent winter wheat harvest in Pakistan and the upcoming spring wheat harvest in Kazakhstan are both expected to be sufficient to allow smooth flow of wheat and wheat flour into Afghanistan with likely fairly stable prices.

Figure I. Assessed areas, April and May 2014



Source: World Food Program (WFP)

SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR



Source: FEWS NET

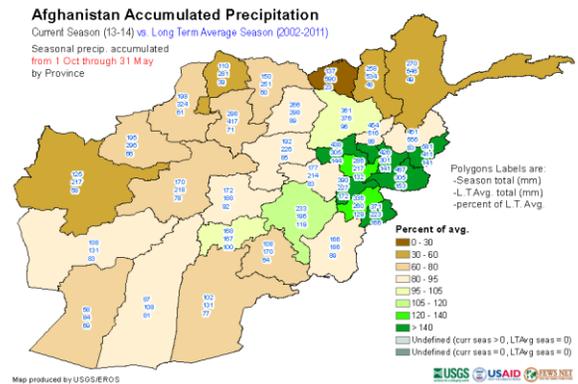
Please see <https://www.wfp.org/countries/afghanistan> for more information on food security in Afghanistan.

NATIONAL OVERVIEW

Current Situation

The 2013/2014 wet season started very slowly. Accumulated precipitation from October to January was well below average and even below last year’s similarly sluggish start. However, in early February, large snowstorms hit Afghanistan, which brought significant snowfall in higher elevation areas. Some lower elevation areas in the Southwest, including areas in Farah, Helmand, and Kandahar Provinces received snow for the first time in at least 35 years. Since March 2014, the spring rains started on time. They have continued at regular frequency with above average volume into May. The spring rains have had above normal total precipitation, but total accumulated October to May precipitation remained below average and below last year, particularly in northern Afghanistan (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Precipitation from October 1, 2013 to May 31, 2014 compared to the 2002 to 2011 average



Source: [U.S. Geological Survey/FEWS NET](#)

As a result of the steady precipitation since February, temperatures have been below average. Below-average temperatures resulted in slower crop growth than is typical, which delayed the harvest by a few weeks.

Planted area under wheat in 2013/2014 was slightly higher in irrigated areas and higher on rainfed land compared to 2012/2013. The increased planted area is particularly high in northeastern Afghanistan on rainfed land, mainly due to ample precipitation. Nevertheless, anecdotal reports indicate that planted area for wheat was reduced in several relatively insecure areas in Afghanistan due to increased poppy cultivation.

Regular spring rains not only provided favorable conditions for crops, but also led to good pasture conditions that have resulted in seasonally improved livestock health and helped maintain livestock prices well above their five-year averages. Higher livestock prices are likely to increase agropastoralists’ and pastoralists’ (*Kuchis*) purchasing power for procuring food.

Spring rains also caused severe flooding and some landslides. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA), spring floods in late April through early June killed 155 people and affected 125,000 people in 123 districts in 27 provinces. In some areas, flood waters have yet to fully recede. 6,800 houses were destroyed, and 7,600 were damaged. Floods destroyed and damaged standing crops. In the most flood-affected areas of the Northwest, an average two percent of arable land was damaged by flooding. The most affected areas are in Jawzjan, Faryab, Sari Pul, Baghlan, and Balkh Provinces. As of May 29, more than 80 percent of the affected households had received assistance.

Currently, in most areas, labor wage rates are similar to last year, except in eastern, south-central, and east-central areas. In the remaining areas, current labor wage rates are mostly similar to this time of year in 2013. The lack of increase is due primarily to lower demand for construction labor. Reduction in construction is related to the imminent withdrawal of International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF), which has been one factor leading to a reduction in investment in new construction.

Regionally, Pakistan harvested over 25 million metric tons (MMT) of wheat during the *Rabi* harvest over the past few months.

Overall, external food assistance in most areas that was observed or reported during the assessment was less than in 2013. However, it was mostly targeted for specific, acutely food insecure groups of people. The reduction of overall food assistance is primarily the result of the reduced budget for World Food Program (WFP) which led to a revision in the number of beneficiaries of the Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO).

Rural households had improved access to food from local stocks procured during last two above-average harvests in Afghanistan. At the end of current consumption year, households are relying more on market purchase as local stocks are being depleted and hence wheat and wheat flour prices have seasonally increased this spring.

Food Security Outlook

With another above-average grain harvest expected from June to September, most sources of food and income are more available and at higher level than recent years. The wheat harvest will increase food available to households and markets. Wheat-producing households are likely to be able to store more stock than usual for the 2014 to 2015 consumption year. Sharecroppers and agricultural laborers paid in-kind are likely to have more food than in the last two years, which were already above-average harvests.

Pastoral households' economic access to food has already increased due to higher livestock prices, particularly for sheep. Poor and landless households mostly depend on agricultural labor wages, and these varied in different parts of the country. However, they are mostly similar to last year, providing similar though slightly lower economic access to food due to rising food prices. Labor wages though are expected to seasonally increase in the coming months, slightly more than just the seasonal trend. Wages generally peaks during the harvest when a day of harvest labor is likely to reach AFN 500 to 600 per day in northern, wheat-growing areas. With the high planted area this year, labor demand will be higher during the harvest, further increasing harvest labor wages.

With adequate supplies of wheat and wheat flour likely to remain available from Kazakhstan and Pakistan and the above-average domestic harvest, wheat and wheat flour prices are likely to remain mostly stable through September in rural Afghanistan, after which, they may rise due to high demand for households and traders to purchase stocks for the winter and lean season.

Livestock prices are likely to remain higher than last year in most of the country, and labor wages in the areas where they are higher such as eastern Afghanistan are also likely to remain higher than last year. With more money to stock or having more stock from households' own production, the February to April 2015 lean season is likely to start on time but be less severe than usual. However, there will still be the typical, seasonal loss of dietary diversity for most poor households in the winter and the lean season. In the West-Central Highlands Agropastoral livelihood zone where last year's harvest was quite poor, the wheat harvest in September and additional sources of income including migration for the poppy harvest in Helmand Province in May will likely increase incomes and food access, if there are not additional shocks this season.

Wheat rust was reported and observed in eastern Afghanistan. It may reduce yields in Qarghai District in Laghman Province and on some land in the Kunar Valley, but it was not particularly widespread. In some cases, it is not likely to prevent crops from reaching maturity or necessarily damage the grain itself.

Below-average temperatures caused frost that affected stone fruit and almond trees this year, particularly but not only in parts of the North including central Samangan Province. This is likely to cause loss of income from sales of almonds, peaches, and apricots due to the expected low yields. Some of these households may require assistance to help replace some of the lost income, but many households will be able to secure additional labor opportunities and other sources of income to help stock for winter and the lean season.

The displaced and some returnees are likely to be acutely food insecure. The newly internally displaced persons (IDPs) are likely to require assistance as many of them have lost their homes, access to land, and other assets. As April 30, 2014, there were over 667,000 IDPs of whom, 131,222 had been displaced in the past year. Returnees from Pakistan, particularly those who have been unable to return to their places of origin are also likely to be acutely food insecure due to their limited contacts to secure livelihoods in their new locations. However, in some cases, these households received some assistance for their return.

Across the country, due to floods and landslides, households who have lost homes, assets, and crops will likely be acutely food insecure as they will largely be unable to harvest this year. Of course, many of these households are already receiving assistance. At least 125,000 individuals were affected by floods and landslides. More than 90 percent of the flood-affected individuals are in the North.

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Since 2008, the pre-harvest assessment has become a tool for decision-making processes regarding food insecurity response in Afghanistan. By undertaking the pre-harvest assessment, the World Food Program (WFP), the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL), and the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) cooperate to provide information to donors, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA), and other stakeholders to gain a greater understanding of what occurred during the agricultural production season and recent or potential shocks that are likely to impact food security over the coming consumption year. The assessment provides an initial, qualitative estimate of the level of domestic production of wheat and of key cash crops. In cases where below-average production is expected, the pre-harvest assessment helps define which areas are most affected and in which areas further research and investigation are necessary to determine the likely severity and prevalence of acute food insecurity. This assessment has also been referred to as the pre-crop assessment or the food security appraisal survey in some years.

The assessment does not only emphasize domestic agricultural production, though agricultural production influences both food availability and household food access. The assessment provides information about other key determinants of food access from markets, including major sources of income in rural areas such as livestock prices and agricultural labor wage rates. The assessment examines the livelihood options available to poor households to better inform how humanitarian response can complement households' existing livelihoods and coping strategies.

METHODOLOGY

The assessment was conducted in 70 districts in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan (Figure 1). The assessment consists of three survey modules. The first module is for the staff of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations (UN) agencies, or other organizations working in humanitarian relief, development, or agriculture. The second module is for the Department of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock's (DAIL) provincial offices. The third survey module is for community-level/village-level focus group discussions based on the rapid rural appraisal (RRA) methodology's reliance on self-reporting by communities. This third module is used in at least in two districts in each province, including at least one area with intensive irrigation and one area with less or no access to irrigation where appropriate. In each of the two districts, two communities/villages are surveyed, usually one focusing on an upstream area that is likely to have better water access and one in a more downstream area. This year, due to the highly diverse livelihoods and high chronic levels of food insecurity, four districts in Badakhshan were assessed. While not a large-scale, scientific survey, triangulation and other techniques are used to assess each province's likely overall crop production and current and most likely food security outcomes.

MAIN FINDINGS

Eastern Provinces: Kunar, Nangarhar, Laghman, and Nuristan

(Urban population: ~235,600 people, rural population: ~2,237,400 people)

Current Situation

Eastern Afghanistan's (Figure 3) livelihoods largely depend on irrigated agriculture. Only 6,000 hectares (ha) of rainfed land are typically cultivated in Sarkano and Marawara Districts in Kunar Province. The Kabul, Kunar, and Laghman Rivers supply most of the irrigation water in this region. Vegetable production provides the largest source of cash income in the intensive irrigated areas. The share of land used for vegetable production has increased considerably over the last 10 years because of high profit margin compared to wheat grain and the short distance to major, urban markets including Kabul and Jalalabad. Households do cultivate wheat for their own consumption, but they tend not

Figure 3. Eastern provinces



Source: WFP

to sell it. Kabul tends to be a more profitable and larger market than Jalalabad. In Jalalabad, Pakistani rupees (PKR) are the primary currency for cash transactions while in Kabul Afghanistan afghani (AFN) is the means of payment. As PKR is the most commonly used currency in much of eastern Afghanistan, vegetable producers take advantage of both better prices and the favorable AFN to PKR conversion rates by selling in Kabul.

Similar to last year, above-normal precipitation led to wheat stem rust in some areas. The affected area was only significant in Qargahie District in Laghman Province and in a few parts of the Kunar Valley.

In the high-elevation areas, arable land is limited. Instead, the primary income source is from formal employment, typically in the security field in the Afghanistan National Army (ANA), the Afghanistan National Police (ANP), and the Afghanistan Local Police (ALP). Formal employment is an important secondary source of cash income in the intensive irrigated areas. The second major source of cash income is agricultural labor. This year, this income source is 30 to 50 percent above last year due to good production and high demand for agricultural labor. Agricultural production is a major source of food in both intensive irrigated and high-elevation areas, but in high-elevation areas, almost all crop production is for own consumption. On the edges of the Speen Ghar Mountains in Nangarhar Province, the major source of income is poppy production. Area planted was reported to be higher than last year.

Poor households' consume primarily from their own production during the summer and fall, but they purchase staple foods from markets in the winter and spring. Currently, households are primarily consuming their own production of vegetables and livestock products along with purchased wheat. Planted area under wheat is similar to last year. One exception where planted area was lower was the areas nearest the Speen Ghar Mountains where poppy replaced wheat on many farms. Crops are generally in much better condition than the last two years because of the above normal spring rains in March and April.

145 households have been affected by flooding, and over 14,300 IDPs who were displaced by conflict since last April 2013 were living in the region.

Food Security Outlook

The wheat harvest is underway. Many farmers and other observers expect it to be greater than 2013 in terms of total volume. The obtained harvest can last a household six months in the high-elevation areas and 10 months at lower elevations. Poor households switch to market purchases as winter approaches. This year, market purchases should be at a sufficient level as all sources of income are likely to be even higher than in a normal year. Agricultural labor wages are higher than the last year due to the seasonally normal crop development and above-average livestock prices. The level of formal employment with ANA, ALP, and ANP is stable.

Favorable cropping conditions and food security outcomes are likely to continue, but potential shocks such as flooding could change the food security outcomes. Floods often occur between June and August, associated with very heavy rains during the Indian Monsoon, though this may be less of a risk this year due to the expected, suppressed monsoon rains.

In Qargahie District in Laghman Province and in parts of the Kunar Valley, wheat stem rust had already damaged crops at the time of the assessment. It is likely that wheat yields will be reduced to 10 to 15 percent below normal. Rust has been somewhat mild in its impacts so far this year.

WFP has planned 4,000 MT less food aid this year than in 2013. Humanitarian access to rural areas continues to decline, primarily due to civil insecurity. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and International Red Cross (IRC) are the leading agencies serving IDPs, and their local staff indicated that they have sufficient funds to deal with potential displacement, if it occurs at levels similar to recent years. Currently, acute food insecurity is concentrated among IDPs, returnees, and households affected by small-scale floods. The region hosted over 117,400 IDPs as of April 30, 2014, of which over 14,300 had been displaced over the past year. Around 145 households have been affected by small-scale floods.

Northeastern Provinces: Baghlan, Kunduz, Takhar, and Badakhshan

(Urban population: ~580,500 people, rural population: ~3,140,700 people)

Current Situation

Northeastern Afghanistan (Figure 4) has many areas that produce an agricultural surplus, particularly of wheat. The exception to this general characteristic is Badakhshan Province, which tends to have a deficit of cereals even during an above-average harvest. The arable land of this region is a mixture of irrigated and rainfed, but the population is mostly concentrated in irrigated areas.

Figure 4. Northeastern provinces



Source: WFP

Some household members from the poor wealth group who live in the highlands migrate to the large farms in the lowlands during the wheat harvest and during rice planting in search of day labor opportunities, which provides a significant source of income. When the harvest is complete in the lowlands, they return back to their villages in the highlands to harvest their own crops, which typically takes place two and a half months later than in the lowlands. Other major sources of income and food in this region include sharecropping, livestock production, and formal employment with the ANA, ANP, and ALP.

Current labor wages were similar to last year. Area planted under wheat is reported to be higher than normal, particularly on rainfed land. Crop conditions are generally better than the last year. Moreover, livestock prices are higher than last year. For example, a sheep can fetch between AFN 1,500 and AFN 2,000 more than last year.

In a normal year, one hectare of irrigated land can produce 3.5 MT of wheat. On rainfed land, this would be only 1.5 MT of wheat. However, this year rainfed wheat yields are likely to be much closer to typical yields for irrigated wheat in the Northeast. The highest yields are likely to be found in Ali Abad District in Kunduz Province.

There are over 3,300 flood-affected households in the Northeast. In the entire North, there are 33,900 new IDPs who have been displaced in the past year. Many of these people are acutely food insecure or require close monitoring of their food security.

Food Security Outlook

Poor households in the highlands are likely to have more income than normal from labor opportunities in the lowlands. During the wheat harvest which started in June and rice cultivation which started in May, agricultural labor wages could reach up to AFN 600 per day during the periods when demand for agricultural labor is highest. In addition, poor households at higher elevations will have their own, likely above-average harvest in September. With above-average yields and production likely across the region, even sharecroppers (*dekhan*) in the lowlands are likely to be able to stock more food than usual for winter and the lean season.

Northwestern Provinces: Samangan, Balkh, Sari Pul, Jawzjan, and Faryab

(Urban population: ~761,700 people, rural population: ~2,911,700 people)

Current Situation

The Northwest's arable land is a mixture of irrigated and rainfed land (Figure 5). However, far more land is rainfed than irrigated. Thus, this region's agricultural production is more dependent on spring rainfall than any other part of the country. Fortunately, spring rainfall has been above average over the past three years.

When spring rains are normal in terms of frequency and volume, these provinces produce surplus wheat for sale to other regions. In a drought, the region usually has a wheat deficit, and households must buy imported wheat from other regions or other countries. In addition to insufficient spring rainfall, other recurrent shocks include high levels of salt in drinking water, erosion along the Amu River, and flooding. However, the floods in the Northwest this year have been at a much larger scale with a larger affected area and far more affected households than other floods in recent history.

The major sources of food and income are agricultural and livestock production in irrigated areas. In high-elevation or downstream, irrigated areas, the sources of food and income for poor households are labor migration to the intensive irrigated areas during the harvest, own production, and livestock production. Employment in the ANA, ANP, and ALP and sharecropping are other key sources of food and income for poor households in both highland and irrigated areas.

Daily labor wages in April and May were the same as in 2013.

Crops conditions are generally better than last year. However, in eastern Sozman Qala District of Sari Pul Province and Shulgara District of Balkh Province, rainfed crops are not currently performing as well as in other areas. The wheat crop in these areas was planted very late. However, there was quite an expansion of planted area. Usually, not much of the hillsides are occupied with spring wheat, as most of the cultivation is along the river valleys or on flatter, rainfed land. This year, many farmers expanded their planting onto the hillsides in response to good spring rainfall. Thus, some of the wheat which is not performing as well would not be planted in a more typical year.

Planted area under wheat on rainfed land is more than last year. In irrigated areas, planted area under wheat is similar to last year. Contributing factors to the generally good crops conditions include the above-average spring rains and above-average irrigation-water availability.

In central Samangan as well as in Khulum District of Balkh Province, frost damaged almond trees. Last year, these almond trees were also damaged by frost, but the extent of the damage is greater this year. When it was warm in January, some trees flowered, but after that, temperatures fell to far below freezing for up to three days in February, effectively eliminating the possibility of these almonds ripening this year. Other tree crops including stone fruit were also damaged.

Exceptional flooding occurred in April and May. These floods damaged crops and housing affecting more than 90,000 people in the Northwest. While the damage was widespread and many people lost homes, assets, and crops, these floods provided irrigation water and flood water to some downstream farms that helped bolster crop growth in those areas.

Flood-affected individuals are concentrated in this region. Of the individuals affected by floods, more than 70 percent of them live in the Northwest. Many of them are currently acutely food insecure though many of them have already received some assistance.

Food Security Outlook

With above-average spring rainfall, an above-average harvest is likely for the third year in a row.

In central Samangan as well as in Khulum District of Balkh Province, frost damaged almond trees, which may lead to very low yields this year as many trees may not yield any almonds.

Due to expected above-average crop conditions, labor wages are expected to peak during the harvest time in June/July when daily wage rates are likely to reach AFN 500 per day. Thus, poor households in the highlands are likely to obtain higher than

Figure 5. Northwestern provinces



Source: WFP

the normal income from labor migration to the lowlands during the harvest time for the third consecutive year in a row. Moreover, poor households are likely to have an above-average harvest. Sharecroppers in the irrigated areas are likely to obtain more food than usual due to higher expected wheat yields. In a year with above-average agricultural production, even households in rainfed areas who are often unable to stock enough wheat for a full year's household consumption may be able both to fully stock for the coming year and to earn some cash income from wheat sales. Due to good fodder availability and pasture conditions, livestock body conditions and prices are likely to remain near their current high levels for the rest of the year, which will strengthen the purchasing power of poor households and agropastoral households.

Many flood-affected households, particularly those households who lost their houses and key tools or other assets necessary for their livelihoods, are acutely food insecure. Currently humanitarian assistance received by affected households should provide for a month or two of food, and it is expected that assistance will continue for a couple of months. Local government and humanitarian partners have pledged to assist in reconstruction of houses before the start of winter. However, priority will probably be given to northeastern provinces where winter starts earlier. Affected households will not be solely relying on assistance. They will cope in other ways with lost income. For example, they are likely to seek more labor opportunities where the grain harvest is being conducted or to work in rice cultivation, increase internal and external labor migration, and reduce expenditures on non-staple food and on non-food purchases. In addition, second crops or late planted crops could be cultivated in areas where waters have receded and fields are ready for cultivation. However, demand for agricultural tools and seed for second crops may be much higher than typical. Second crops could include sesame, mung beans (green grams), melons, and sunflowers among others.

Western Provinces: Herat, Badghis, Farah, and Nimroz

(Urban population: ~590,200 people, rural population: ~2,355,600 people)

Current Situation

The western region of Afghanistan borders three countries, Iran, Turkmenistan, and Pakistan, so cross-border trade is more important than in other areas of Afghanistan. The primary livelihood strategies include agriculture, animal husbandry, labor migration, and cross-border trade. Herat and Badghis Provinces have both irrigated and rainfed wheat production, while Farah and Nimroz Provinces nearly exclusively rely on irrigated wheat production. In rainfed areas, years of poor total rainfall or poor rainfall distribution usually lead to poor wheat production. All provinces of this region produce a surplus of wheat in years with above-average production. Farah and Nimroz Provinces more rarely produce a surplus. Badghis Province produces surplus wheat even in average years, and it has a deficit only when there is drought. Herat Province has two main livelihood zones. The northern part of the province is intensively irrigated, but the southern part is a semiarid, agropastoral zone. In recent years, Farah Province has had a decline in wheat cultivation due to a corresponding increase in poppy cultivation, which performs well in the semiarid conditions. Agricultural production in Nimroz Province has had multiple droughts and many years of poor production over the last decade, but in 2012 and 2013, as an exception to general trends, it produced a surplus of wheat due to well distributed spring rainfall. The main livelihood strategies are agriculture and livestock production, but labor migration and cross-border trade are important, additional sources of income for people residing in central Nimroz and near the borders with Iran and Pakistan.

Own production is the primary source of staple food in this region, followed by market purchases. Own production usually lasts for four to six months for the average households in Herat, Farah, and Nimroz Provinces. It lasts for almost eight to 10 months in Badghis in a year with above-average production. Poor households mainly rely on agricultural wage labor, construction work in cities, and migration to Iran in search of work as well as some in-kind agricultural labor wages and, in some cases, sharecropping (*dekhani*). Since May 2012, the Iranian rial (IRR) has depreciated against the Afghanistan afghani (AFN). Thus, poor households report that their income from labor migration and remittances has dropped. This has also caused a decrease in labor migration to Iran and an increased supply of labor on local labor markets.

Figure 6. Western provinces



Source: WFP

Planted area under irrigated winter wheat slightly decreased from last year due to a lack of irrigation water in some areas at planting time during the late fall and decreased rainfall during that time. Rainfed wheat area planted, however, slightly increased above last year due to steady rainfall during the early spring. Distribution of improved wheat seed and fertilizer increased in this region except in Herat where there were fewer distributions than in recent years. There was also the distribution of improved saffron seeds.

This year, plant disease incidence significantly decreased due to cold weather. In general, the current condition of wheat and other crops is better than the last two years. Most crops are developing normally. Frost in Herat Province damaged orchards. Also in Herat, 30 to 35 percent of the wheat was affected by frost in nine districts, in Kohsan, Ghoryan, Zendajan, Robat Sangi, Chesht, Obe, Pashton Zargon, Enjil, and Zendajan. Some localized flooding was reported around the time of the assessment.

Currently, livestock have good body conditions, and pasture is available. However, it was reported that a cold snap killed around 1,000 sheep in Shebekoh, Lashwa Juwain, and Pusht Rod Districts in Farah Province. Livestock prices generally increased by AFN 500 to 1,000 per head, except in Badghis Province. The increased sheep prices are likely related to reduced supply on markets. With plenty of pasture available in good condition, pastoralists and agropastoralists usually keep younger livestock off the market in order to re-build or build bigger herds. However, the increased livestock prices still supported the purchasing power of pastoralists and agropastoralists.

The agricultural labor wages are generally the same as last year. Despite likely higher demand due to higher planted area, the stable wages are likely due to decreased labor migration to Iran in comparison to previous years, leading to a larger supply of labor within the region. Compared with the last year, the wage labor rates slightly increased in Herat and Nimroz Provinces, but they remained the same in Badghis Province. The reported rates decreased in Farah Province.

While labor was mostly steady in price, wheat has increased in price over the past year. Thus, the agricultural wage labor to wheat terms of trade (ToT) decreased 11 percent from the last year. However, the sheep to wheat ToT increased 17 percent as the rise in sheep prices outweighed the increase in wheat prices.

Acute, transitory food insecurity has affected over 500 households due to flooding in Herat, Badghis, and eastern Nimroz. 21,900 IDPs and returnees who have arrived in the past year are living in this region. Most of the IDPS were displaced by conflict.

Food Security Outlook

Unless there is a major shock or a rapid change in agroclimatic conditions between now and the harvest, food security will likely seasonally improve after the harvest starts in June. The harvest for the entire region would likely be slightly better or the same as last year in terms of yields and total production.

The harvest will increase food availability at the household and regional level, though for households who need to purchase, prices are above this time last year despite ample market supply. With increased demand for agricultural wage labor during the harvest, poor households will likely have more income. Continued adequate pasture conditions will support livestock production and will improve the quality of consumption of households who have access to milk. Milk and livestock products can also serve as significant income sources in some areas.

Saffron production in Herat is expected to increase from 3.5 MT last year to 4 MT this year due to more improved seed distribution. This harvest is expected to start in November.

While no new shocks are currently anticipated, if there were an early cessation of late season rainfall, agricultural production would be much lower than anticipated, especially in Herat and Badghis Provinces and especially in high-elevation areas. However, localized floods and heavy winds during the harvest are likely in Nimroz Province, which could reduce crop yields in the affected areas. The current wheat price is higher than last year, and if the level of production were to be much less than anticipated and the price of imported food commodities increase further, food insecurity would increase among households that primarily rely on market purchases. The purchasing power of poor households relying on labor wages

decreased due to the wheat price increasing. The rainfed harvest is still at risk of many natural shocks, so close monitoring for new shocks or hazard events, including changes in prices or market behavior, will continue to be necessary.

Southwestern Provinces: Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul, and Uruzgan

(Urban population: ~487,300 people, rural population: ~2,250,900 people)

Current Situation

This region borders Pakistan and has a high level of civil insecurity. The main livelihood strategies include agricultural production of orchard, cereal, and poppy crops, livestock husbandry, wage labor, and some cross-border trade. This region is one of the highest-volume poppy-producing areas. All provinces of this region have a wheat deficit except Helmand. The arable land in this zone is almost all irrigated, except in Zabul where there is around 3,000 hectares (ha) of rainfed, arable land. Kandahar Province also has a very small rainfed area of around 300 ha.

Figure 7. Southwestern provinces



Source: WFP

The sources of staple food in this region during spring and summer include own produced cereals, which typically last households four to six months. In Helmand, households supply themselves for eight to 10 months with wheat from their own production. Market purchases also occur in the spring and summer, and much of the cash income for these comes from orchard crop sales. During fall and winter, the primary source of staple food is purchases of stocks from spring and summer production. Poor households in this region rely primarily on market purchases for most of the year. These are funded by agricultural labor wages from cereal, poppy, and orchard harvests and from construction work. For the poor, own production and sharecropping may provide food for two to three months.

Both irrigated and rainfed wheat were planted in a larger area than the last two years due to adequate amounts of timely rainfall. Currently, there are no major shocks affecting crop production, but there are localized reports of pests, and there was some small-scale flooding. Increased planted area is mainly attributed to the pattern of well distributed rainfall and improved agricultural extension services in the region by the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL). In general, the distribution of improved seed and fertilizers is reported to have been less than in recent years. This was reported in Helmand and Zabul Provinces, but a slight increase in distributions was reported in Kandahar and Uruzgan Provinces.

Standing wheat and other crops are currently in better condition than last year. Livestock and pasture conditions are better than the last year, and livestock prices are higher than last year by AFN 500 to 1,500 per head.

Overall, labor opportunities are more available, and the labor wage is slightly higher than last year. The wage rate increased in Kandahar and Zabul, but it decreased in Helmand and Uruzgan. The decreased wage rate is likely related to the reduction of construction work and NGO-facilitated livelihood-support activities in the area.

Despite the slight increase in the labor wage in some provinces and the increased livestock prices, the price of wheat increased more over the past year. Both the regional average agricultural wage labor rate to regional average wheat ToT and the sheep to wheat ToT deteriorated by 18 percent and 13 percent, respectively, from last year.

Over 120 households were affected by floods. 32,860 people came to this area due to being displaced by conflict or being returnees. All of these groups are likely to be newly acutely food insecure, having lost valuable assets and having yet to establish new livelihoods.

Food Security Outlook

With continued seasonally normal conditions, food security will likely seasonally improve with the harvest. This year's increased planted area and the healthy condition of other crops, including orchard crops, will likely provide more labor opportunities than usual. In some areas, shocks such as floods may still reduce yields and damage crops in some areas. Based on the mid-season performance of crops, the cereal harvest this year would likely be higher than both 2013 and 2012. The good harvests this year would improve food availability at both the household and regional market level, and the positive economic impacts of the harvest on labor wages and other factors would improve access to food for the middle as well as for poor households. The good conditions of orchards in the region will likely increase household cash income and also provide additional job opportunities during the harvest for poor households. In some places, some diseases were reported to being present in orchard crops but at a level that was less than last year. If there is prevention or amelioration of these plant diseases, this income source for farmers would further increase. Due to timely rainfall, better pasture conditions will improve forage availability for livestock. Increased livestock production improves food consumption for households with access to milk, and it will likely increase household income from sales of surplus livestock products and of livestock.

Southeastern Provinces: Paktya, Paktika, and Khost

(Urban population: ~37,600 people, rural population: ~1,473,100 people)

Current Situation

This region borders Pakistan and has a high level of civil insecurity. Each province of this region mainly has irrigated land, and there is only a negligible amount of rainfed cropping. Despite the presence of irrigation, the entire region has a wheat deficit, even in years with average or above-average productions. The primary livelihood strategies are agriculture, livestock husbandry, remittances primarily from the Gulf countries, and short-term labor migration within Afghanistan.

Sources of staple food include own cereal production, which lasts from four to six months. Market purchases make up the other source, using cash income from remittances and labor. The poor also collect and sell firewood as a source of income. Poor households in this region mostly rely on market purchases of food.

On average, the planted area both for irrigated and rainfed crops is higher than last year, likely as a result of the good amount and consistent pattern of the spring rains. The amount of improved wheat seed distributed was significantly less than last year. However, in addition to improved seed this year, fertilizer was distributed by MAIL.

Currently, there have not been major shocks to agricultural production or labor. However, some wheat rust occurred in Khost Province as did some flooding. Currently, the condition of wheat and other crops are healthy. The harvest prospect for the entire region would likely be higher than last year, except in Khost where it is likely to be the same as last year when frost and floods damaged some of the wheat.

Pasture conditions are better than usual. However, in this region, over the past several years, many areas that were once pasture have been occupied by houses or converted to use as fields for rainfed agriculture, reducing access to pasture and this issue is more serious in Khost province. Livestock are also in better condition than last year, and livestock prices are higher than the last year by AFN 500 to 1,500 per head. In general, the availability of local labor opportunities and the labor wages are about the same as last year, except in Khost Province where wages increased due to increased labor demand, mostly in the construction, transportation, and trade sectors.

Figure 8. Southeastern provinces



Source: WFP

However, due to increased wheat prices, the agricultural labor wage to wheat ToT decreased nine percent since last year. Despite increased livestock prices, sheep to wheat ToT are nearly the same as last year. A further increase in wheat prices would reduce the purchasing power of agropastoralists, pastoralists, and laborers.

Over 110 households were affected by floods in this region. 4,068 IDPs have been displaced, primarily due to conflict, and are living in this region. These households are acutely food insecure as they have lost access to valuable productive assets and are likely to be unable to access their usual sources of food and income.

Food Security Outlook

Unless there are significant shocks to production, current crop conditions indicate that production would be well above average in terms of volume this year.

With continued seasonally normal conditions, food security will likely seasonally improve with the harvest. Agricultural production is likely to be higher than in either of the last two years in all of the provinces. Generally, above normal production this year would support poor households through improved availability and access to food and labor opportunities. Agriculture within the region and in neighboring areas will demand more labor than usual during the harvest due to the higher planted area, which could assist poor households to work more days a month, although the rates are likely to be the same for the entire region and similar to last year.

South-Central Provinces: Kabul, Logar, Wardak, and Ghazni

(Urban population: ~3,505,300 people, rural population: ~2,726,300 people)

Current Situation

Population density is higher in this region than all the other regions of the country. As a result of the high population, all the provinces except Logar have a wheat deficit, even in years of average or above-average production. For Kabul Province, the deficit is especially pronounced due to the large, urban population who do not grow wheat. The main livelihood strategies in this region are agriculture including orchard and cereal production, livestock husbandry, and both formal and informal labor. Kabul Province has the highest number of formally employed people, working in the government, the private sector, and at non-governmental institutions. Irrigated wheat production is the dominant form of agriculture.

The main source of staple food in this region varies between areas. In Kabul, the large population makes market purchases year round, but in Logar, own production of wheat may provide eight months of food. In the other two provinces, own produced wheat lasts for a maximum of six months, but in the remaining months, households rely on market purchases. The poor households in this region include the landless, small-scale sharecroppers, and the socially disadvantaged including widows, households headed by the disabled, and households headed by the elderly. The largest poor group though are labor-dependent households who typically do informal labor both inside the country and in Pakistan. The poor mostly rely on market purchases for food, so price fluctuations of wheat flour and of their labor wage rates can have large impacts on their food security.

Planted area of both irrigated and rainfed wheat was higher than last year in all provinces. Distribution of improved wheat seed decreased compared to recent years, but in addition to improved seeds, fertilizer was distributed to farmers by MAIL, which will likely contribute to improved yields. Timely spring rains were the primary factor leading to increased wheat planting. Currently, the only observed shocks to agriculture were some localized floods which damaged crops and some frost which damaged stone fruit, such as cherries, apricots, peaches, and plums and almond trees.

Figure 9. South-central provinces



Source: WFP

Both irrigated and rainfed crops are in normal to good condition. Pasture and livestock body conditions are generally better than the last year, and livestock prices are higher than last year by AFN 1,000 to 1,500 per head. The increase in livestock prices are primarily due to better body conditions due to a good pasture conditions and high fodder availability.

Agricultural labor wage to wheat ToT, measured using the regional averages for wages and wheat prices, increased slightly by two percent over the last year. Sheep to wheat ToT increased 12 percent above last year due to increased livestock prices.

390 households lost crops, houses, and other assets to floods this year. There are also some IDPs residing in this region who had to flee their homes due to conflict, and there are returning refugees settling in the region. These households are acutely food insecure as they have lost valuable, productive assets and they are not currently able to access their typical sources of food and income.

Food Security Outlook

With continued seasonally normal conditions, food security will likely seasonally improve with the harvest. Overall, the harvest is likely to have a higher volume than the last two years.

In general, despite reduced demand for labor in the construction sector, the labor wages for the coming year will likely be similar to last year, in part due to high demand for agricultural labor during the harvest. The agriculture sector's additional labor opportunities should help replace the decreased demand in the construction sector due to reduced construction levels. The current labor wage rates should slightly improve the purchasing power of poor wage laborers. Higher livestock prices should sustain the purchasing power of poor pastoralists and agropastoralists.

The largest potential shock that could have a large impact on food security in the region would be wheat rust, which could still damage crops at critical phases of development. Of course, further, unanticipated shocks in the agricultural or construction labor markets could also greatly decrease food security as this region is highly dependent on both types of labor.

East-Central Provinces: Parwan, Kapisa, and Panshir

(Urban population: ~58,300 people, rural population: ~1,159,400 people)

Current Situation

The east-central region's (Figure 6) arable land is predominately irrigated. Irrigation water comes primarily from the Salang, Panshir, and Ghorband Rivers. Even during a drier year, this region tends to have enough irrigation water to support the first cropping season, which consists primarily of wheat. The major source of income is formal employment in the ANA, ANP, and the National Directorate of Security (NDS), which is higher dependence on formal employment than in other parts of Afghanistan, largely due to the close proximity to Kabul's large formal employment market. Following formal employment, agriculture is the second most important source of income during the spring and summer. This source of income consists both of agricultural labor and of crops sales.

Food is obtained during the summer and fall from own production, but during winter and spring poor households rely on market purchases that are primarily funded by formal employment. The current planted area for wheat is similar to 2013, and crops conditions are better than 2013. No shocks to agricultural production were reported in surveys nor observed by the assessment team.

Labor wages and livestock prices are higher than the last year's. This region does not currently host a sizeable number of IDPs or natural disaster-affected households.

Figure 10. East-central provinces



Source: WFP

Food Security Outlook

All sources of income and staple food in 2014 are likely to be better than normal. Incomes from formal employment are expected to be stable. Agricultural production is likely to be higher in volume than the last year's, and casual labor wages are higher than last year, which are likely to remain at that level or be higher through the harvest. As livestock prices are higher than the five-year average, agropastoralists in the region should be able to source food from livestock sales.

A heavier than usual Indian monsoon between June and August could lead to flooding. While not currently forecast, this potential hazard would reduce the productivity of the second crops or disrupt the harvest of wheat. However, so far, the monsoon rains have been somewhat less than normal, allowing for a normal start of the harvest.

Central Highland Provinces: Bamyan, Daykundi, and Ghor

(Urban population: ~19,100 people, rural population: ~1,492,400 people)

Current Situation

The central highlands are a mountainous region. There are high levels of poverty, and this area has a very high level of chronic food insecurity due, in part, to vulnerability to many natural and market-related shocks. There are fewer economic opportunities in this region, and the difficult terrain hampers trade and transportation. Civil insecurity tends to be fairly low compared to other parts of the country, and there are very few IDPs present. The main livelihood strategies include agricultural production of cereals, potatoes, fruit, and tree nuts, along with livestock husbandry, local labor, labor migration within Afghanistan, and international labor migration, often to Iran. All provinces of this region have a wheat deficit, even in years with average or above-average wheat production. Bamyan Province produces a surplus of potatoes, which provides over half of national supply. In all three provinces, there are significant areas of both rainfed and irrigated production. Land holdings tend to be very small in this region.

The sources of staple food in this region include own produced cereals, which last up to six months. Market purchases are also a major source of staple food, and cash income for these purchases comes from orchard crop sales, potato sales, livestock sales, migratory labor, local labor, and remittances from within the country and from abroad. Poor households mainly consume market purchased household stocks, which must be bought in September and October before the arrival of winter.

Planted area for irrigated wheat was more than last year in this region. Rainfed planted area at the time of the assessment was the same as last year, but these high elevation areas have a different cropping calendar than most of Afghanistan, so the assessment was before the end of the planting window. In rainfed areas, additional area could still be planted as planting was ongoing during the assessment. Planted area for irrigated wheat decreased from last year in Ghazni, but it remained the same in Bamyan. It increased in Daykundi. Rainfed planted area was less than last year in Ghazni and Daykundi, but in Bamyan, it was the same as last year. Except some localized floods, there are no major shocks which have affected agriculture or animal husbandry. Improved seed distribution was more than last year, and similar to other areas of the country, fertilizer was also distributed. Wheat crops were developing normally and in good condition in May, and the harvest will likely have a higher volume than last year in Ghor and Daykundi. This early in the wheat crop's development, it is difficult to forecast likely yields and volume in Bamyan.

Pasture conditions have been very good due to steady, adequate rainfall. Livestock body conditions are good, and sheep prices have increased by AFN 300 to 1,000 per head over the last year.

This year's increased irrigated planted area, and the normal-to-good conditions of other crops including orchard crops will provide more labor opportunities than usual for poor households. However, the labor wage rate for the region is less than last year. Due to a significant increase in wheat prices, agricultural labor wage to wheat ToT, measured using the regional

Figure 11. Central highland provinces



Source: WFP

average prices for wages and wheat, decreased 23 percent over the last year while sheep to wheat ToT remained the same as last year.

Some households are still experiencing acute food insecurity due to last year's poor harvest, which was concentrated in Ghor. In addition to those households, 260 households have been affected by floods. These households have lost key productive assets, crops, or housing, and they are acutely food insecure at this time. Very few IDPs or returnees live in this region.

Food Security Outlook

With continued seasonally normal conditions in Bamyan and Daykundi, food security will likely seasonally improve with the harvest in August/September. Overall, the cereal harvest is likely to be slightly larger than last year, especially in Ghor. Harvests of potato and horticultural crops are also likely to be slightly larger than last year. Local production should help improve in local food availability, but any further increase in wheat and wheat flour prices, especially during the critical September to October period of stock purchases, could have large effects as most households in this region need to purchase at this time due to the impassibility of roads during the winter. In general, labor wages for the coming year would likely continue to be higher than last year due to increased demand for agricultural labor during the harvest and competing opportunities in other parts of the country and locally in non-agricultural sectors. Increased livestock prices will sustain the purchasing power of poor pastoralists (*Kuchi*) in the area and for most other households since livestock sales are a key source of cash for staple food purchases.

The largest, likely potential shocks that would have a large impact on food security in the region would be plant or livestock disease outbreaks, unusually cold weather, and other pests, such as rats that would consume food stocks or crops in the field. These provinces will require close monitoring as the time between now and the end of the harvest in September is longer than in other regions. Thus, the potential for unforeseen shocks is higher.

In Ghor province, it is still very early in the season due to the high elevation. The harvest is likely to be better than last year. While horticultural crops such as fruit and nuts could perform satisfactorily, households always need to buy wheat flour, so price fluctuations of wheat flour or of cash crops could adversely affect households' ability to buy stocks. If livestock prices stay lower as they are likely to do due to high transportation costs to this region, this is likely to limit the ability of poor households to make sufficient market purchases to buy stocks for the winter. Potential shocks in the remainder of the season could include plant and livestock disease outbreaks, unusually cold weather, or a summer drought during the growing season between now and September. Close monitoring will be required for the remainder of the season.