

## Executive Brief: Tajikistan Integrated Food Security Phase Classification

### Overview

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Tajikistan is a mountainous landlocked country which lies in the south-eastern part of central Asia. The country gained independence from Soviet Russia in 1991. Several years of civil conflict subsequently destroyed socio-economic infrastructures and further aggravated the situation of a population which is today considered as the poorest of the CIS region as well as the most food insecure<sup>1</sup>. Tajikistan is a patchwork of four very distinct regions which are separated from each other by high mountain ranges. Population is largely concentrated in the western half of the country while the eastern part (GBO region) consists of the Pamir mountain range. Cotton and wheat are the main cash crops for Tajikistan. National industry is highly specialized on minerals, aluminium processing and textile production.

### How was the IPC conducted?

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The Food Security Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) was carried out in a participatory manner involving a wide range of food security actors in Tajikistan. A thorough secondary data review was conducted to collect sufficient information to carry out the meta-analysis. A methodological workshop was organized in Tajikistan during which an adapted IPC reference table (proxy indicators and threshold levels) was developed. A sub-regional level of analysis was also agreed upon (clusters of districts sharing similarities in terms of livelihoods, slopes/elevations, socio-ecosystems). The IPC analysis itself and the classification of the districts were done on the basis of technical consensus during a national workshop on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2009 which brought together members of the government, NGOs, and UN agencies. Results of the phase classification were partially cross-checked at the regional level with local stakeholders during a pilot regional IPC workshop (DRD East).

#### **The IPC: classifying food security**

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a **standardized scale to describe the food security situation** in a given country according to 5 Phases:

- 1- generally food secure
- 2- moderate/borderline food insecure
- 3- acute food and livelihood crisis
- 4- humanitarian emergency
- 5- famine/humanitarian catastrophe

To date, the IPC has been piloted or being increasingly introduced in a total of 15 countries in the Great Horn of Africa, West and Southern Africa and Southern Asia. An additional 13 national governments have been introduced to the IPC through training events and workshops. The IPC is not an assessment method per se. It applies a convergence of evidence approach drawing from multiple data sources, methods and methodologies.

### How does Tajikistan classify?

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For the 2009 summer period most of Tajikistan classifies as being “moderate/borderline food insecure” (phase 2). Evidence however suggests a strong probability that significant portions of the territory might slip into “acute food and livelihood crisis” (phase 3) during the winter. The attached map provides detailed account of the food security phase classification at the

<sup>1</sup> In 2007, about 53 percent of the population was living below the poverty line of US\$41 per month (2007 World Bank figures) while USDA estimates that 80% of the population consume below the nutritional target (Food Security Assessment, 2008-09 / GFA-20, Economic Research Service/USDA, June 2009)

sub-regional level. Good level of production for summer crops and proximity to regional markets have improved local food security situation in the Western part of DRD and the Western part of Khatlon (phase 1: generally food secure). The situation in GBAO remains characterized by moderate/borderline food insecurity (phase 2) due to high dependence on remittances and problematic market access. Population in Eastern DRD and Eastern Khatlon are also mostly in a situation of moderate/borderline food insecurity (phase 2) due to low income and scarce employment opportunities. The central districts of the Sughd region (Shahrison, Ghonchi, Istaravshan) are affected by moderate/borderline food insecurity (phase 2) due to decreased employment opportunities and lower amount of received foreign remittances. Localized pockets of acute food insecurity (phase 3) were identified in Jirgatal, Tavildara and Khuroson. This is the result of exogenous local shocks such as extreme weather patterns (Jirgatal, Khuroson) or punctual insecurity related to anti-drug military operation (Tavildara).

### **The food security situation in Tajikistan (summer months May-September 2009)**

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Because of its endemic poverty and the weakness of its state services, the population of Tajikistan is extremely vulnerable to the occurrence of external shocks. The 2008 winter compound crisis and the repetition of hazards (floods, mudflows, and extreme weather patterns) has stressed traditional coping mechanisms and adversely affected the resilience of the poorest households. In this context, the economic crisis which has further developed in the first semester of 2009 has directly hit the poorest households and has put an important number of them in a situation of moderate/borderline food insecurity.

The overall economic situation deteriorated in the first semester of 2009 causing a drop in industrial production (-13%), export revenues (-48%) and an overall slowing down of the growth rate of the GDP (-50%)<sup>2</sup>. This has largely been the consequence of low prices and weak demand on global markets for cotton and aluminium which remain the two main export commodities for Tajikistan. The global financial crisis has also affected the amount of foreign remittances sent by Tajik emigrate workers, mainly from Russia which dropped by an estimated 34%<sup>3</sup>. It is estimated that those remittances contribute to 30-50% of the national GDP. As a result, unemployment has increased as one third of industrial plants and factories are at standstill and a consequent number of migrant workers are returning to Tajikistan. This situation also entails lower tax revenues for the State which in turn generates delays in the payment of wages and pensions (35 million TJS of arrear payments). Economic Access being largely identified as the main cause for food insecurity in the Country, this economic crisis has thus generated large spread moderate/borderline food insecurity in the country

A certain number of seasonal elements have however contributed to temporarily ease the situation. Summer is a season when households are typically better-off in terms of food security due to summer harvest which means better food access thanks to increased income as well as own production from house gardens. Agricultural season has been favourable this year thanks to timely and sufficient rainfall and possibly change in crop patterns (increased planting of wheat crop instead of cotton crop). As a result, summer crop production for 2009 is expected to be higher by +25-40 % according to estimates as compared to last year figures<sup>4</sup>. The good level of agricultural production has also supported the relative stability of

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<sup>2</sup> Comparison between figures for the period January-June 2009 and figures for the same period over the preceding year (2008). Source: Tajikistan National Committee on Statistics

<sup>3</sup> Comparison between figures for the period January-May 2009 and figures for the same period over the preceding year (2008). Source: Ministry of Economy

<sup>4</sup> According to the National State Committee on Statistics, National Cereal production for the 2008/9 first season should reach 0.94 million tons. This figure is 25 percent above last year's annual estimate; and 9 percent above the average annual production of the previous five years. FAO Tajikistan provided estimate figures of +40% for the first season crop production as compared to last year figures.

prices for food items. The cost of the Food Basket was of 85.14 TJS in July 2009<sup>5</sup> which represents a decrease of 13% as compared to the prices for the same period last year. It should be however noted that prices remain at a significantly higher level than before the mid-2007 world hike in food prices. (+19% as compared to May 2007)

This may have produced changes in the traditional patterns of food insecurity: Some areas which are traditionally better-off due to the plantation of cotton and presence of industries (Sughd, DRD, Khatlon) seem to be now affected by food insecurity. In the meantime, it appears that rural households may have better resisted to the economic crisis than urban ones thanks to house gardens and income from cash crops.

### **Projected evolution for the winter season 2009**

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It is likely that enduring negative economic conditions in the Central Asian Region will aggravate the prevailing moderate/borderline food security situation (phase 2) and will evolve in some districts into a situation of acute food and livelihood crisis (phase 3). Increased unemployment and drop in the level of foreign remittances might entail difficulties in economic access to food. The eastern districts of DRD (Jirgatal, Rasht, Tojikobod, Tavildara, Nurobod) as well as the eastern districts of Khatlon (Farkhor, Vose, Kulob, Hamadoni, Baljuvon, Khovaling, Muminobod, Shurobod) appear to be the most vulnerable in this prospect. Any potential restriction on the labour market in Russia would further aggravate this trend. Participants identified that diversity in livelihoods and crop production will be a key aspect for resilience of the poorest communities in Tajikistan. Districts which mostly rely on monoculture of cotton or wheat (e.g. Mastchoh, Pyanj, Vose, Kulob) or specialized industrial activity such as aluminium processing (e.g. Tursunzoda) will be more affected by the winter. Other areas which benefit from greater diversity in livelihoods (animal products, vegetable/fruits cash crops, cross border trade) will probably better absorb potential shocks.

### **Response options**

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It is suggested to carry forward the implementation of projects that will address the situation in existing pockets of food insecurity (Khuroson, Jirgatal, Tavildara) so as to restore the resilience of those communities before the winter. Considering the potential deterioration of the situation during the winter 2009, it is recommended to continue with the quarterly monitoring of the food security situation by involving the food security community at both national and regional levels. Particular attentions should be given to indicators concerning economic access to food. Any further degradation of the macro economic situation or hike in fuel prices should be treated as an early warning of a potential food security crisis. It is advised to give particular attention to the regular outputs of the national early warning system in terms of hazards such as extreme weather patterns, floods, and mudflows. Any small scale shock could have severe impact in terms of food insecurity given the already stressed coping strategies of the most vulnerable households.

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<sup>5</sup> WFP Figures. Food basket is defined according to the standards set up by the World Bank Tajikistan Living Standards Survey (TLSS)