Quarterly Food Security Monitoring

Methodology Note

Afghanistan | December 2025

In addition to the NMF, the QFSM will help to delve deeper into the food security pillar of the NMF, in collaboration with WFP. The motivation behind this is to be able to provide more detailed sectoral information to meet individual cluster needs.

Sudden or unexpected need evolution can trigger a rapid assessment (Rapid Food Security Probing – ToR here). This trigger functionality serves as one of the key objectives of the QFSM, and additionally RFSP has the possibility to ground truth QFSM (and NMF) findings. To this end, RFSP is not only to be developed in emergency contexts but to assess QFSM inclusion and exclusion biases.

Background

Considering the high levels of needs amidst limited available resources as well as seasonal and geographic variations affecting Afghanistan, REACH proposes to jointly develop an analytical framework with WFP to monitor food insecurity across the country in near-real time. This will be critical to support a targeted response with subnational prioritization and possibly detect pockets at high risk of deteriorating food security to inform anticipatory action.

As a component of this framework and of broader real-time monitoring activities developed within the Afghanistan context, such as the Needs Monitoring Framework and Shocks Monitoring Index, REACH will develop an analytical framework to allow for a quarterly monitoring of food security outcomes. Leveraging existing data sources, this framework will allow for a quarterly overview of needs, by ranging districts by severity of outcomes and enabling to identify districts whose communities are experiencing a worsening of their food security situation, across the three key dimensions of food security. Eventually and as this analytical framework is rolled-out and perfected, its inclusion as a sectoral component of the multisectoral Needs Monitoring Framework will be considered and discussed with relevant stakeholders such as the Food security cluster.

Key Objective

Develop a framework that will allow for a regular monitoring of food security dimensions leveraging available data sources, to consolidate existing real-time monitoring analysis within WFP and support a more targeted response and area prioritization.

Methodology Overview

The Quarterly Food Security Monitoring will rely on an analytical framework consisting of a collection of indicators from regular (quarterly or monthly) assessments, with corresponding severity thresholds for each indicator from least concerning (1. None/Minimal) to the highest levels of needs (5. Catastrophic). Although the framework will mainly rely on data from REACH's quarterly Humanitarian Situation Monitoring, other data sources may be considered[1], such as market data from the Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI). Although the district is the primary geographic analysis unit at which the data analysis will be conducted, it may also be replicated at the province level to provide less granular results.

[1] Additional data sources that will be considered include WFP-VAM's Market Bulletin Data, remote-sensing data analyzed by Alcis, as well as community-based early warning signed identified by the Community Driven Development Organization.

Table 1. Overview of the dimensions of food security (*as described by the global Food Security Cluster*)

Dimension	Description	Sub-dimension
Access	Food access (of households in specific population groups) is the ability of households to regularly acquire adequate amounts of appropriate food for a nutritious diet: physical, financial and social dimensions	- Physical restrictions to access to resources/food. - Financial limitations to the purchase of food. - Social barriers of groups to access resources/food.
Availability	Food availability is the food [of appropriate quality] that is physically present in the area of concern and expected to become available for use in that area within the period of concern – from domestic production and imports (including direct food distribution through food aid)	- Agricultural production (crops, livestock, fisheries, aquaculture) and inputs - Rainfall patterns - Internal and external trade flows
Utilization	Food utilization (by households in specific population groups) refers to the use that households make of the food to which they have access and individuals' ability to absorb and metabolize the nutrients and the conversion efficiency of the bod	Factors likely to impact nutrients absorption, such as: - Availability of items to safely store and prepare food. - Consumption of food in sufficient and diverse quantities, breastfeeding - Intra-household food distribution dynamics - Access to clean water, hygiene and sanitation facilities and services - Prevalence of diseases which may limit or prevent the ability to absorb nutritional value - Maternal, infant, young child and adolescent feeding practices - Gender dynamics

From a theoretical perspective, the Quarterly Food Security Monitoring will build upon the three accepted dimensions of food security, as documented by the global food security cluster[2]: Access, Availability and Utilization[3]. In addition to this, a fourth dimension will be considered, consisting of Food Consumption and Livelihood change and reflecting the impact of the three former dimensions.

[2] Food Security Cluster, April 2022, Food Security Dimensions Documents.

[3] Although a fourth and cross-cutting dimension, Stability, could also be considered, it was decided not to include it as it is more closely related to exogenous shocks having an impact on the three main dimensions of food security, and can already be considered to be covered by the Shocks Monitoring Index that REACH is developing as part of a collaboration grant with WFP-VAM.

Each indicator added in the framework will be indexed to one of those food security dimensions, and the aggregation of indicator-specific data will assign a single severity for each dimension – allowing for a better overview of key drivers of food security needs in each assessed district.

Aggregation methodology

Throughout the aggregation process, each district will receive a severity from 1. None/Minimal to 5. Catastrophic for each of the four dimensions. An overall food security severity will then be derived from those dimension-specific severities. The overall severity and four dimension-specific severities will be consolidated into a single dataset to allow for comparisons and identification of drivers of food insecurity, and each of them will be mapped individually.

The aggregation methodology draws primarily from the Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework (JIAF), while the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) is used as an analytical reference to guide the interpretation of food security outcomes. Since the IPC is a consensus-based process and does not prescribe aggregation procedures, its role here is limited to informing conceptual alignment rather than the aggregation steps themselves. Adjustments to the methodology are made to reflect the nature of the data used in the RTM framework (e.g., settlement-level KI data and inputs from multiple assessments).

1. Data preparation

Prior to aggregation, every data point (corresponding to a single interview) will receive a severity for each of the indicators it informs, based on the thresholds outlined in the Analytical framework.

For HSM data, where KIs report on settlements with varying sizes, each interview will be weighted according to its population's relative size compared to the population of all assessed settlements within the district it lies in. For instance, for a settlement with a population of 10 households located in a district where 6 settlements where assessed and the sum of the assessed settlements' population is 50 households will receive a weight of ***(10/50)/(1/6) = 1.2*** - irrespective of the district's overall population.

2. Indicator-level aggregation

Once all data points have received a severity for every relevant indicator based on the thresholds outlined in the analytical framework, each settlement will have an assigned severity score (1–5). To determine the district-level (area-level) severity for each indicator, settlements within the district are then ranked from most to least severe, and the district-level severity is determined by the severity category represented in the most severe 20% of settlements.

This approach ensures that the aggregation reflects the conditions faced by the most affected portion of the population, in line with IPC-inspired principles focusing on the worst-off groups.

For instance, in a district where 0% of settlements fall in severity 4 or 5, 15% in severity 3, and 8% in severity 2, the most severe 20% of settlements fall within severity 2; therefore, the district would receive a severity of 2 for that indicator

3. Dimension-specific aggregation

Once every area has received a severity for each indicator, severities will be aggregated at the food security dimension level, based on the average severity of all indicators within each dimension.

For the Food Consumption dimension, in the specific case where a settlement combines a severity of 4 for indicators 17, 18 and 19 (indicative of severe hunger, practice of emergency level coping strategies and third-level negative behaviours to cope with lack of food) will receive a severity of 5 for the dimension.

4. Quarterly food security severity

The overall food security severity will consist of the average of all individual indicator severities, weighted so that each dimension has the same weight (0.25) in the overall severity.

Data Analysis Plan

#	Sector	Indicator name	Assessment name	Granularity	1. None/ Minimal	2. Stress	3. Severe	4. Extreme	5. Catastrophic
1	Food Access	% settlements where KIs reporting on food insufficiency in the settlement in the past 30 days	HSM	District	Nobody or almost nobody (around 0%)	A few (around 1 in 4 people or 25%)	About half (around 2 in 4 people or 50%)	Most (around 3 in 4 people or 75%)	Everyone or almost everyone (around 100%)
2	Food Access	% of settlements where KIs reporting women lack access to income-generating activities	HSM	District	Yes	No criteria	No	No criteria	No criteria
3	Food Access	% settlements where KIs	HSM	District	30 minutes to 1 hour	1 to 2 hours	More than 2 hours	No access to market	No criteria

		reporting the average time for accessing the nearest food market							
4	Food Access	% of settlements where KIs reporting the three most common challenges for women regarding access to markets	HSM	District	No significant barriers; access is largely unconstrained	Minor or manageable barriers that slightly hinder access	moderate barriers that significantly limit access for many women	Major barriers that prevent access for most women in affected settlement	Near-total inability to access to market due to pervasive, critical challenges
5	Food Access	% settlements where KIs reporting on the problem with food accessibility	HSM	District	No problem	Moderate problem	serious problem	very serious problem	Extremely serious problem

6	Food Access	% settlements where KIs reporting on the ability to purchase essential food items in the past 30 days	HSM	District	Always able to purchase essential food items	Sometimes able to purchase essential food items	Rarely able to purchase essential food items	Unable to purchase essential food items	No criteria
7	Food Access	% settlements where KIs reporting the sudden change in food item prices in the past 30 days	HSM	District	No change Or small decrease Or a big decrease in prices	small increase in prices	big increase in prices	No criteria	No criteria
8	Food Availability	% settlements where KIs reporting agriculture as a primary income source reporting a	HSM	District	Nobody or almost noboby	a few (around 1 in 4 people or 25%)	About half (around 2 in 4 people or 50%)	Most (around 3 in 4 people or 75%)	All or almost all (around 4 in 4 people or 100%)

		decrease in agricultural production in the last 3 months of at least 50% per proportion of households							
9	Food Availability	% settlements where KIs reporting a sudden drop in the number of livestock in the past 30 days	HSM	District	Not applicable - people do not currently raise animals in this community, Number of livestock is normal or almost normal for this time of the year	No criteria	Number of livestock is about half of what's normal for this time of year	Number of livestock reduced by more than half	No criteria

10	Food Availability	% traders reporting unavailable food basket items in markets Food basket items include: Wheat flour (local or imported), vegetable oil, pulses (beans, lentils or split peas) and salt	JMMI	Province	All food basket items are widely available	One or two food basket items have limited availability	One food basket component is completely unavailable OR Three to four food basket items have limited availability	Two food basket items are completely unavailable	Three or four food basket items are completely unavailable
11	Food Utilization	% of settlements where the majority of KIs reported their settlements do not have access to	HSM	District	Yes, water has been sufficient	Rarely (1-2 days)	Sometimes (3-10 days)	Often (11-20 days)	Always (more than 20 days)

		suffcient quantity of water for drinking, cooking, bathing, washing or other domestic use							
12	Food Utilization	% of settlements where Kis report the majority of households have access to a functional and improved sanitation facility	HSM	District	Everyone or almost everyone (around 100%)	Most (around 3 in 4 people or 75%)	About half (around 2 in 4 people or 50%)	A few (around 1 in 4 people or 25%)	Nobody or almost nobody (around 0%)

13	Food Utilization	% settlements where KIs reporting if the households have access to adequate healthcare, they need	HSM	District	≥85%	60–84%	30–59%	10–29%	<10%
14	Food Utilization	% of settlement where KIs reporting on main source of drinking water for most people	HSM	District	Water comes from an improved source (Protected from outside contamination (improved water source), for example: piped water/tap, covered dug well,	Water comes from an unimproved source (Not-protected from outside contamination (for example: unprotected well, traditional dug well, unprotected	Surface water, for example: river, dam, lake, pond, stream, canal, irrigation system, etc.	No criteria	No criteria

					pumped well/borehole, tanker truck/carts with tank/store, bottled water, water bags, protected rainwater, etc.)	natural spring, etc)			
15	Food Access	% of settlements where KIs reporting on the perceived level of hunger among the households	HSM	District	No hunger or almost no hunger - the majority of households had access to food everyday over the last 30 days	Hunger is minor - most households have only RARELY no access to food (during the last 30 days, most households had no access to food during a maximum	Hunger is moderate - most households have SOMETIMES no access to food (during the last 30 days, most households had no access to food during	Hunger is severe - most households have OFTEN no access to food (during the last 30 days, most households had no access to food during more than	No Criteria

						of 2 days in total)	3 to 10 days in total)	10 days in total)	
16	Food Access	In the last [30 days], what proportion of the population in [the community] had to do very unusual and desperate things just to obtain a small amount of food?	HSM	District	Nobody or almost nobody (0%)	A few (around 1 in 4 people or 25%)	About half (around 2 in 4 people or 25%)	Most (around 3 in 4 people or 75%)	Everyone or almost everyone (around 100%)

17	Food availability	% of settlements where KIs reporting on Condition of pasture during the grazing season compared to last year.	HSM	District	Better/Slightly better	Similar to last year	Slightly worse than last year	Worse than last year	No Criteria
18	Food availability	% of settlements where KIs reporting on fruit production condition compared to last year	HSM	District	Better/Slightly better	Similar to last year	Slightly worse than last year	Worse than last year	No Criteria
19	Food availability	% of settlements where KIs reporting on milk production condition compared to last year	HSM	District	Better/Slightly better	Similar to last year	Slightly worse than last year	Worse than last year	No Criteria