

AFGHANISTAN SPECIAL REPORT: Pre-Harvest Assessment May 2013

Wheat harvest volume from May to September likely to be above average

KEY MESSAGES

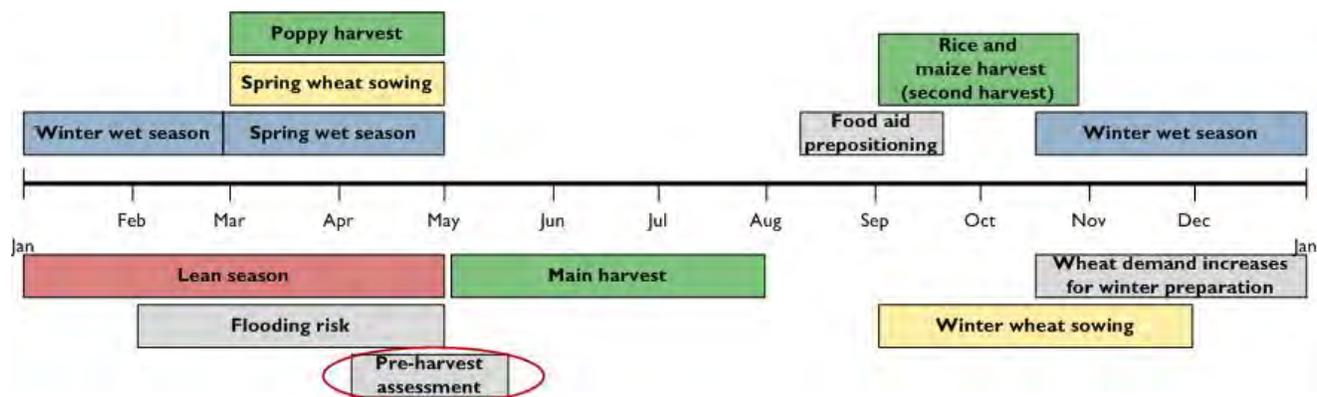
- With the arrival of spring slightly early this year and well distributed and timely spring rains, the national wheat harvest is likely to be above average, especially in the surplus-producing northern and eastern areas.
- Despite most sources income performing better than last year and in seasonally normal ways, some groups of households in Afghanistan remain acutely food insecure. Prominent among these are returnees, natural disaster-affected households, and internally displaced persons (IDPs). In addition to conflict and insecurity being the primary reasons for IDPs leaving their homes, insecurity continues to be a potential major driver of food insecurity.
- Key sources of income such as harvest sales, agricultural labor, and livestock sales are expected to perform seasonally normally over the course of the consumption year, but there are a few areas where various sources of income are not performing as well that will require further monitoring.

Figure 1. Assessed areas, April and May 2013



Source: World Food Program (WFP)

SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR



Source: FEWS NET Afghanistan

NATIONAL OVERVIEW

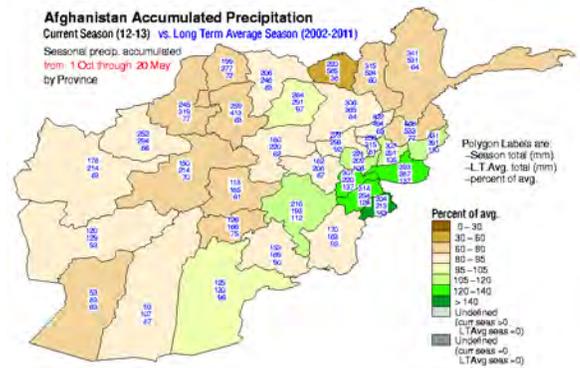
Current Situation

The start of the 2012/2013 wet season was slow with limited amounts of rain and snow from October to December, though there were larger storms in some areas. During late February and in March, the spring rains started on time, and they have continued at a regular frequency since then. While the spring rains have thus been near normal in terms of their total precipitation, [total seasonal precipitation since October remains below the 2002 to 2011 average](#) in the northern and central parts of the country (Figure 2).

Please see <https://www.wfp.org/countries/afghanistan> and <http://coin.fao.org/cms/world/afghanistan/en/Home.html> for more information on food security in Afghanistan.

Temperatures at lower elevations in northern Afghanistan started to be [above average as early as late January](#). With regular rains and warmer than usual temperatures, in addition to good supplies of saved seed from the 2012 harvest, spring wheat land preparation and sowing occurred 15 to 20 days earlier than normal in rainfed areas of northern Afghanistan. The regularity and continuity of the spring rains through early April encouraged farmers in northern, rainfed areas to increase area planted under spring wheat. Planted area both for rainfed and irrigated areas has ended up being an increase from last year. Plant diseases have not been particularly prevalent. As a result of the favorable temperatures, rains, seed availability, and lack of plant disease outbreaks, Afghanistan’s 2013 May to September cereal harvest is likely to be similar to or even slightly above 2012. 2012 was the second largest recorded grain harvest.

Figure 2. Precipitation from October 1, 2012 to May 20, 2013 compared to the 2002 to 2011 average



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

Regular spring rains not only provided largely favorable conditions for crops, but also led to a regeneration of pasture conditions that has resulted in seasonally improved livestock health and helped maintain livestock prices that are well above the five-year average. Higher livestock prices are likely to enable agropastoralists and Kuchi (pastoralists) to purchase food this spring.

Generally, the current labor wage rates are higher than last, particularly in northern Afghanistan. Nevertheless, in a few areas of northern Afghanistan, the current labor wages are similar to 2012 because of lower demand for labor in the construction sector compared to last year. Reduction in construction activities is largely related to uncertainty among investors in light of international troop withdrawals expected in 2014. In western Afghanistan, as less labor migration to Iran is occurring, wages are similar to or lower than in 2012 due to the increase in labor supply, as fewer migrants leave to Iran.

Overall, the external food assistance level in most areas is broadly similar to 2012, primarily targeting malnutrition among children, the natural disaster-affected households, and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Stocks of emergency assistance in the regions remain available for households that may be affected by natural disasters later in the spring, summer, or fall. While most areas have expected assistance available largely similar to 2012, western Afghanistan has seen a large reduction in resources compared to last year. Available food aid tonnage in western Afghanistan has fallen by 81 percent from 2012 to 2013.

Food Security Outlook

Following the 2012 above average harvest volume, many households entered the lean season with more food stocks than usual. This year, another high volume harvest is likely to increase food availability both at the household and market levels, providing household food stocks for wheat-producing-households for the June to May 2013/2014 consumption year. Market-dependent households in many areas should be able to purchase more local wheat for this consumption year.

Even for poor, landless and pastoralist households, economic access to food is currently seasonally increasing and likely to be somewhat above average due to the current high labor wages which may increase further during the harvest and above average livestock prices. During the harvest, the labor wages may peak at between AFN 500 to 600 per day in high productivity, wheat-growing areas. In highly productive years, there is a potential for labor shortages in rural Afghanistan to increase wage rates.

Due to above normal crops conditions for the 2013 harvest, a rise in the labor wage since last year in many areas, above average livestock prices, and continued income from formal employment, the January to April 2014 lean season is likely to start on time, but most households will have more staple food stocks than average.

By taking into account the abovementioned positive developments, acute food insecurity over the 2013/2014 consumption year is likely to be most concentrated among IDPs displaced by conflict, particularly newly displaced IDPs, returnees from

Pakistan, particularly those households who have been unable to return to their places of origin and have joined IDPs in camps, the natural disaster-affected households who have lost land, homes, or other assets to flooding, landslides, and other natural hazards. Also, assistance will continue to be necessary for households affected by malnutrition, as identified by the health clinics. These groups' food security severity outcomes are currently classified as Stressed (IPC Phase 2) from now to September by FEWS NET. However, without external assistance, food security outcomes could be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3).

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) across Afghanistan are the primary population of concern. Conflict is the primary cause of households becoming IDPs. Conflict also continues to be a major driver of food insecurity by disrupting trade, income earning opportunities, agriculture, and animal husbandry. An increase in conflict and civil insecurity as 2014 approaches could lead to significant deterioration of food security in affected areas. Of potential causes of food security over the medium term, most communities cite insecurity as a key, potentially highly disruptive driver of food insecurity.

Current imported wheat flour prices are higher than their five-year averages. However, the above normal 2013 harvest is likely to help stabilize prices as it reduces the demand for imported wheat flour. Also, following harvests in the northern areas of Central Asia in August, the price of wheat flour in the region could decrease based on new production and substantial stocks remaining in Kazakhstan.

While the overall situation is much better than usual, risk factors remain, and some provinces require closer monitoring, in case new hazards disrupt agricultural production and other livelihood activities this year or as the agroclimatic variables are not yet clear for the consumption year. For climatic and agricultural monitoring, Khost, Ghazni, Herat, Badghis, Ghor, Bamyán, and Daikundi all require close, further monitoring of their seasonal progress. Most areas face some risk of insecurity and conflicts, so this is a second factor requiring close, further monitoring.

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Since 2010, 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 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 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 already occurred and potential shocks 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 severity and prevalence of acute food insecurity. This assessment has also been referred to as the Pre-Crop and Food Security Appraisal Survey in past years.

The assessment does not only emphasize domestic, agricultural production though this influences both food availability and household food access. The assessment also provides information on 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 responses can best complement households' existing livelihood and coping strategies.

METHODOLOGY

In 68 districts in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan, the assessment was conducted (Figure 1). The assessment consists of three survey modules. The first module is for the staff of non-government 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 in each province. The third survey module is a community-level/village-level focus group discussion, based on the rapid rural appraisal (RRA) methodology's reliance on self-reporting by communities, which is conducted in at least in two districts in each province including at least one intensive irrigated area and one lower irrigated area where appropriate. In each of the two district, two communities/villages are surveyed, usually one focusing on an upstream area and one in a more downstream area. The information, while not a large-scale, scientific survey, uses triangulation and other techniques to assess each province's likely overall cropping and food security

conditions. In April and May 2013, a total of 148 communities, 34 DAIL offices, and 52 U.N. and NGO officials were interviewed/surveyed. All of the population figures are from the [Central Statistics Organization \(CSO\) of Afghanistan's](#) estimates of 2013-14 settled populations.

MAIN FINDINGS

Western Provinces: Herat, Badghis, Farah, and Nimroz

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

Current Situation

This region (Figure 3) borders three countries, Iran, Turkmenistan, and Pakistan. 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 in varying proportions, while Farah and Nimroz Provinces nearly exclusively rely on irrigated wheat production. The rainfed parts of this region strongly depend on the rainfall, and years of poor total rainfall or poor rainfall distribution lead to production shocks. Badghis Province produces surplus wheat in good years, and has a wheat deficit only in years of 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. Farah Province has never been self-sufficient in wheat production. This province currently also cultivates poppy which does well in the semiarid conditions. Agricultural production in Nimroz Province has had multiple droughts and years of poor production over the last decade, but in 2012, as an exception to general trends, it produced a surplus of wheat. The main livelihood strategies in Nimroz are agriculture and livestock production, but labor migration and cross-border trade are important, additional sources of income.

The primary source of staple food in this region is own production, followed by market purchases. Own production usually lasts for four to six months for the average households in Herat, Farah, and Nimroz Provinces, while it lasts for almost eight to 10 months in Badghis in a good year. Poor households mainly rely on wage labor in the agricultural sector, construction work in cities, and migration to Iran in search of work as well as some own production in the form of agricultural wages in-kind and/or sharecropping. The poor households' income has been reported to have dropped due to the depreciation of the Iranian rial (IRR) against the Afghanistan afghani (AFN) which has been occurring since around May 2012. This also has caused a decrease in labor migration to Iran. The increased supply of labor on local labor markets in this region is one result of fewer labor migrants. However, the demand for agricultural labor is expected to increase during the harvest.

In general, the 2013 planted area of wheat in both irrigated and rainfed areas is higher than 2012 and 2011 in all provinces of the region with the exception Farah Province, where poppy cultivation has increased, limiting planted area for wheat. Increased distribution of improved seed compared to recent years, appropriately timed rainfall, and the improvement in agricultural extension services are all contributing factors to the increased spring wheat planting.

In general, the current condition of wheat and the other crops is better than last year. No major adverse shock has occurred, except for some localized floods in central Badghis Province, in Balabolok District in Farah Province, and in Pashtoon Zarghon District in Herat Province.

Although labor opportunities in agriculture sector will increase demand due to the increased planted area at the harvest, the labor wage is currently slightly below or the same as last year. While there is no reduction in construction labor demand in Herat, the labor wage decreased from last year. The labor wage rate increased from last year in Nimroz Province, and it remained unchanged in Badghis. The reason for current labor wage situation is the increased supply of labor due to reduced labor migration to Iran as a result of the depreciation of the Iranian rial (IRR), restrictions by Iran on labor migrants from Afghanistan, and the increased cost of living in Iran.

Figure 3. Western provinces



Source: WFP

Livestock body conditions are better than the last year in the region due to good forage and pasture availability. However, in general, the livestock prices did not change considerably from last year. Farah and Herat provinces had some moderate increase in price, while it decreased in Badghis and was almost the same as last year's price in Nimroz. The decreased livestock price in Badghis as one of the main livestock producing provinces is probably related to the increased supply, the depreciation of the Iranian rial, and falling demand within the region due, in part, to fewer remittances from Iran.

Currently acutely food insecure groups include 11,000 natural disaster-affected households, 25,500 IDPs, and returnee households living in IDP camps.

Food Security Outlook

With continued seasonally normal conditions, food security will likely seasonally improve with the harvest in June unless there are major shocks. The harvest prospects for the entire region would be better than the last year due to increased cultivation, except in Farah province where the wheat production is expected to be the same as last year due to the same planted area of wheat and an increase in poppy cultivation.

The good harvest this year will improve food availability at household and regional level which will help stabilize the price of cereals. Poor households will benefit from increased demand for wage labor in the agriculture sector. Good pasture conditions will support livestock production and will improve the dietary consumption of households who have access to milk as well as their income from livestock and livestock product sales. If late season rainfall ceases early in the eastern areas, half of Herat and Badghis Provinces could still have poorer levels of production. Other potential shocks this year include localized flooding, plant diseases such as localized wheat rust and smut outbreaks, locusts and other pests, and high winds during the harvest in Nimroz, which would reduce the yield. Close monitoring of the situation is needed for these potential hazard events.

WFP planned for 8,237 metric tons (MT) of food aid in 2013, which is significantly lower than last year's 18,500 MT under Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations (PRRO) and 24,000 MT under an Emergency Operation (EMOP). This represents an 81 percent decline in the availability of food aid in western Afghanistan for the year.

Southwestern Provinces: Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul, and Uruzgan

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

Current Situation

This region (Figure 4) 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 are wheat deficit areas, except Helmand. The arable land in this zone is dominantly irrigated, except in Zabul where there is a significant amount of rainfed, arable land.

Figure 4. Southwestern provinces



Source: WFP

The sources of staple food in this region include own production of cereals which lasts for four to six months, except in Helmand where it lasts an average households for eight to 10 months, and cash income from orchard crop sales, which fund market purchases. Poor households mainly rely on market purchases for most of the year. These are funded by agricultural labor wages from cereal, poppy, and orchard harvests, from construction work, and from some sales of own produced crops from small land holdings and/or sharecropping, which may last for two to three months. This year's increased planted area and the good condition of other crops including orchard crops will provide more labor opportunities than usual for poor households.

The current year's irrigated and rainfed wheat planted area is higher than the last two years due to adequate amounts of timely rainfall. Currently, there are no major adverse shocks affecting crop production, but there are localized plant pests and 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 decreased in the region compared to recent years. There was decreased seed distribution in Helmand and Zabul Provinces, but there was a slight increase in Kandahar and Uruzgan Provinces.

The 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.

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

Currently acutely food insecure groups include 8,600 flood- and other natural disaster-affected households and 26,100 IDPs and returnees.

Food Security Outlook

With continued seasonally normal conditions, food security will likely seasonally improve with the harvest unless there are major shocks. The cereal harvest this year would likely be higher than both 2012 and 2011 based on mid-season performance. 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 middle income households as well as poor households. The good conditions of the orchards in the region will increase household cash income and also provide additional job opportunities during the harvest for poor households. Improved pasture conditions will improve fodder availability for livestock and increased livestock production which would improve food consumption for households with access to milk and will increase household income from sales of surplus livestock products and livestock.

Flooding is the primary potential shock to agricultural production in this region, especially in highly flood-prone, low-lying districts including Atghar, Tarnak wa Jaldak, and Kakar Districts in Zabul Province, Shorabak District and the provincial center in Kandahar Province, Dehraud District in Uruzgan, and Sangin District in Helmand. Plant pests were also indicated by communities as a potential shock, so pest outbreaks for orchard and cereal crops should be closely monitored.

WFP food assistance planned to this region is almost double last year's level with food aid in-kind planned at 20,000 MT compared to 2012's 12,000 MT. This should improve the availability of food and food access for poor households. Other forms of assistance in this region seem to be available at around the same level as 2012.

Southeastern Provinces: Paktya, Paktika, and Khost

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

Current Situation

This region (Figure 5) borders with Pakistan and has a high level of civil insecurity. Each province of this region mainly has irrigated land, and there is only a very negligible amount of rainfed cropping. Despite the presence of irrigation, the entire region is wheat deficit. The primary livelihood strategies are agriculture, livestock husbandry, remittances, primarily coming from the Gulf countries, and short-term labor migration both inside Afghanistan and to Pakistan.

Figure 5. Southeastern provinces



Source: WFP

The sources of staple food include own cereal production, which lasts from four to six months and market purchases using cash income from remittances, wage labor, and selling firewood. Poor households of this region mostly rely on market purchases of food.

On average, the planted area for irrigated and rainfed wheat and other spring crops is higher than last year as a result of the good amount and consistent pattern of the rainfall, and the increased distribution of improved wheat seed by MAIL. Currently, there are no major shocks, with the exception of some wheat rust infestation in Khost Province.

Pasture conditions are better than usual. However, houses are increasingly being built in the pastures, decreasing accessibility and availability of pasture in some areas in this region. Livestock body conditions are better than last year, and the livestock prices are higher than the last year, except in Khost Province. In general, the availability of local labor opportunities and the labor wages in the region are higher than in 2012, except for Khost where they are similar to the last year.

Currently acutely food insecure groups include 2,061 IDP and returnee households.

Food Security Outlook

With continued seasonally normal conditions, food security will likely seasonally improve with the harvest unless there are major shocks. The cereal harvest prospects are for a larger cereal harvest than last year for the entire region, but the prospects are lower in Khost Province due to low precipitation and pest infestations in the wheat crop. Generally, the above normal production this year would support poor households through improved availability and access to food, except in Khost Province where production could be lower. High prices of livestock will sustain agropastoralists' and Kuchis' (pastoralists') purchasing power throughout the coming consumption year. Agriculture within the region and in neighboring areas will demand more labor during the harvesting period due to the higher planted area, which could assist poor households in gaining income for market purchases.

While most areas are expected to have well above average production, Khost Province's harvest prospects are less favorable. This is of concern due to the decreased labor wage rate, the lower prices of livestock, and the below normal pasture conditions. Khost Province is an area where further shocks could have a very adverse affect, and therefore, it needs to be closely monitored. Areas expected to have below average cereal production this year include Shamal and Lakand Districts in Khost, Gayaan, Zerok, Dela, Turwee, and Wor Mamai Districts in Paktika, and Zurmat and Laja Mangal Districts in Paktya Province.

The entire region could experience potential shocks, including wheat rust, hail storms, and high winds during the harvest, which reduces yields.

WFP food assistance this year is planned to be 9,061 MT which is higher than last year's 5,748 MT. Other forms of assistance seem to be nearly the same as last year. The increase in food aid will increase availability and food access for poor households in the region.

South-Central Provinces: Kabul, Logar, Wardak, and Ghazni (6,231,600 people)

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

Current Situation

In this region (Figure 6), all the provinces, except Logar, have a structural wheat deficit. For Kabul Province, the deficit is especially pronounced due to the large, urban population. Population density is highest in this region in comparison to all the other regions of the country. The main livelihood strategies in this region include agriculture including orchard and cereal

Figure 6. South-Central provinces



Source: WFP

production, livestock husbandry, and both formal and informal labor. Kabul Province has the highest number of formally employed people, in the government, the private sector, and non-governmental institutions. Irrigated wheat production is the dominant form of agriculture in this region.

The sources of staple food in this region vary. In Kabul, the large population needs market supplies year round, but in Logar, own production of wheat may provide around eight months of food. In the other two provinces, own produced wheat lasts for a maximum of six months, while for the remaining months, households rely on market purchases. The poor households in this region include landless, small-scale sharecroppers and labor-dependent households who do labor both inside the country and in Pakistan along with socially disadvantaged groups including female-headed households, the disabled, and households headed by elderly member. The poor mostly rely on market purchases for food, so they are vulnerable to price fluctuations of wheat flour and of their labor wage rates.

Planted area for irrigated winter wheat is slightly higher than last year. By province, planted area for winter wheat increased in Kabul and Ghazni compared to last year, but it remained the same in Wardak and Logar Provinces. Rainfed planted area this year is also slightly above the last year. A nearly four-fold increase in the distribution of improved wheat seeds by MAIL, good rainfall amounts, and timely rainfall distribution were the key factors contributions to the increased wheat planting. Currently there are no major shocks except for some localized floods.

The irrigated wheat crops' conditions in this region are generally better than last year and 2011. The same conditions are observed for rainfed wheat, except in Ghazni where the condition of rainfed wheat is slightly poorer than last year. Pasture and livestock body conditions are generally better than the last year, and livestock prices are higher than last year due to good pasture conditions and high fodder availability.

Food Security Outlook

With continued seasonally normal conditions, food security will likely seasonally improve with the harvest unless there are major shocks. Overall, the harvest prospects for this year are for a slightly larger cereal crop than last year. Strong local production should help mitigate further price transmission of high international wheat prices to the local market.

In general, despite reduced demand for labor in the construction sector, the labor wages for the coming year would likely be similar to last year, likely due to an increased 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 sustain the purchasing power of poor wage laborers, while high livestock prices would sustain the purchasing power of poor Kuchi (pastoralists) and agropastoralists in the area.

The largest potential shock that could have a large impact on food security in the region would be wheat rust infestation or further or unanticipated shocks in the agricultural, construction, or other labor markets.

Current acutely food insecure groups include 2,000 earthquake- and other natural disaster-affected households and 8,580 households of IDPs and returnees.

WFP food assistance planned for this year is a slightly increase from last year's 12,054 MT to 12,646 MT in this region. The other assistance is available at around the same level as last year.

Eastern Provinces: Kunar, Nangarhar, Laghman, and Nuristan

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

Current Situation

Eastern Afghanistan (Figure 7) is predominately irrigated. The Kabul, Kunar, and Laghman Rivers are the primary sources of irrigation water in this region. The major source of cash income in the intensive irrigated areas of these provinces are vegetable production, which is supplied to Kabul and Jalalabad. Vegetable producers often report price competition from imported Pakistani vegetables to the major markets in cities in eastern and central Afghanistan. In addition, in the intensive irrigated areas, farmers cultivate wheat for their own consumption, not for sale, as farmers sell vegetables for cash rather than wheat.

Some farmers in the intensive irrigated areas of Nangarhar Province experienced wheat stem rust because of above normal precipitation this year. However, thus far, the level of the wheat stem rust has not been widespread.

The primary, current income source in the higher elevations of this region are from formal employment with the Afghanistan National Army (ANA), Afghanistan National Police (ANP), and 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. Agricultural production is a major source of food in both intensive irrigated and higher elevation areas, but in higher elevation areas almost all production is for own consumption. On the edges of the Speen Ghar Mountains in Nangarhar Province, the major source of incomes is poppy production, which is reported to be higher than last year.

Generally, staple foods consumed during the summer and fall seasons are from own production. Currently, households are primarily consuming their own production of vegetables and livestock products along with wheat stored from the previous harvest. The current area under wheat is perceived to be similar to last year, while crops conditions are much better than last year because of above normal precipitation since January (Figure 8).

Currently, the acutely food insecure groups include 6,000 repatriated households from Pakistan and 1,650 flood-affected households whose houses were damaged or destroyed.

Food Security Outlook

In May, the primary grain harvest begins in these regions. The impacts of wheat rust are expected to be minor as the extent of the disease was not large. With good precipitation and growing conditions, the harvest is expected to be above 2012 in terms of total volume. However, as winter approaches, households will shift from consuming their own production to making more market purchases. This year, market purchases should be at an adequate level due to all sources of income being likely to be better than in a normal year. Agricultural and construction labor wages are higher than last year due to the seasonally normal crop development and the implementation of development projects. The level of formal employment with ANA and ANP is stable, but there is a slight increase in employment with the ALP as more localities hire ALP for security reasons. In addition, livestock prices, especially for sheep and goats are higher than last year and the five-year average.

Figure 7. Eastern Provinces



Source: WFP

Figure 8. Irrigated wheat, Kama District, Nangarhar Province, April 17



Source: FEWS NET Afghanistan

Favorable cropping conditions and food security outcomes are likely to continue, but several potential shocks could change the food security outcomes in this region. Strong winds can negatively affect vegetables and wheat crops, reducing yields. This would reduce income from vegetables and household supplies of wheat. Floods during the June to August Indian monsoon as well as too much precipitation during the harvest of vegetables, the harvest of wheat at the higher elevation, and the second crops in September could all reduce yields and reduce income from cash crops.

WFP planned food aid for 2013 is at a similar level to 2012 for the eastern provinces. However, humanitarian access to rural areas continues to decline due to civil insecurity.

Central-Eastern Provinces: Parwan, Kapisa, and Panjshir
(urban population: ~58,300 people, rural population: ~1,159,400 people)

Current Situation

The central-eastern provinces (Figure 9) have predominately irrigated arable land. The Salang, Panjshir, and Ghorband Rivers are the primary irrigation water sources for the central-eastern provinces. Due to the close proximity to Kabul, the major source of cash income is formal employment in ANA, ANP, and the National Directorate of Security (NDS). Agriculture is the second primary sources of cash income during the spring and summer.

Food is sourced during the summer and fall seasons from own production, but during winter and spring, poor households rely on market purchases, primarily funded by formal employment. The current wheat planted area is similar to 2012, and crops conditions are better than 2012 (Figure 10). No shocks to agricultural production were reported in surveys or observed by assessment team, with the exception of an unusually high level of weeds, possibly due to generally wet conditions.

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

Food Security Outlook

In 2013, all sources of incomes and staple food are likely to be better than normal. Income from formal employment is especially stable. Agricultural production is likely to be a higher volume than last year, and casual labor wages are higher than last year and likely to remain at that level or higher through the harvest. As livestock price are high than 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 anticipated, this potential hazard could reduce the productivity of the second crops or disrupt the harvest of the wheat crop.

Figure 9. Central-Eastern provinces



Source: WFP

Figure 10. Wheat, Panjshir Province, May 2



Source: FEWS NET Afghanistan

Northeastern Provinces: Baghlan, Kunduz, Takhar and Badakhshan

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

Current Situation

In terms of wheat production, this region of Afghanistan (Figure 11) often produces a surplus. The exception is Badakhshan Province where the cereal deficit tends to be around 50,000 MT even during years when the national harvest is well above average such as 2009 and 2012. The arable land of this region is mixture of irrigated and rainfed, but the population is concentrated in close proximity to the rivers. The major sources of food and income are agriculture and livestock husbandry.

In the higher elevations, labor migration to the lowlands during the harvest and during rice cultivation provides a key source of income. The harvest in the highlands is two and half months later than the lowlands, so poor households to migrate to the lowlands for casual, agricultural labor, then return to complete their own harvest. Other major sources of income and food include sharecropping, livestock production, and formal employment with the ANA, ANP, and ALP.

Current labor wage and livestock prices are higher than last. Crops conditions are better than last year and area under wheat is reported to be higher than normal, particularly rainfed areas (Figure 12). Contributing factors to good crop conditions are early spring wheat plantation and timely and continuous rainfall. Some farmers experienced wheatworms cut. However, when the temperatures dropped back to below normal due to continuous precipitation the wheatworms cut were eliminated.

Food Security Outlook

The poor households at higher elevations are likely to have better than normal income from labor opportunities in the lowlands during the harvest and during rice cultivation in May and June. The labor wages could reach up to AFN 600 per day, according to local estimates. In addition, poor households at higher elevations will have above normal harvest from their own crops in August/September, which will further improve food availability and access. In the lowlands, poor households who sharecrop are likely to have more food stocks than usual, thanks to generally good production conditions.

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

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

Current Situation

While there is some irrigated land in the northwestern provinces (Figure 12), there is a very large share of rainfed arable land. This region is thus more vulnerable to drought than most other parts of the country. When it rains, these provinces often produce surplus wheat, but in a year of drought, the region is typically wheat deficit. Rainfed grain production levels vary greatly from year to year. In addition to droughts leading to large wheat deficits, other recurrent shocks include the growing number of drinking water sources that have become saline and erosion along the Amu River.

In the irrigated areas, the major sources of both food and income are agricultural and livestock production. In higher elevation areas or in areas further downstream in irrigation systems, the sources of food and income for poor households in

Figure 11. Northeastern provinces



Source: WFP

Figure 12. Rainfed wheat, Takhar Province, April 21



Source: FEWS NET Afghanistan

higher are labor migration to the intensive irrigated areas during the harvest time, own production, and livestock production. Formal 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.

Unlike other areas, the current labor wages in April and May had not increased since 2012. As there has been reduced demand for construction labor in the region, due to the completion of several large projects which have not been replaced by new projects, the lower construction wages have spread to the agricultural labor sector. However, livestock prices are higher than last year.

In general, crops conditions are better than last year (Figure 14). However, in eastern Jawzjan Province and eastern Sari Pul Province, crops are not currently performing as well as they were in 2012. The wheat crop in these areas was planted very late this year. Rainfed wheat planted area is larger than last year. Contributing factors to the generally good crops conditions include timely, well distributed rain and good water availability from other sources. In central Samangan, frost damaged almond trees, which may only produce around a third of their normal yield this year. Last year, these almonds were also damaged by frost, reducing yields to only ten percent of usual.

Flooding in April was the other adverse factor that has negatively affected both crops and housing conditions in parts of the region. However, these floods were beneficial for some downstream farms in Jawzjan Province.

Food Security Outlook

In 2013, poor households in the higher elevation areas are likely to obtain higher than normal income from labor migration to lower elevations during the harvest and more food from their own agricultural production. Sharecroppers in the irrigated areas are likely to obtain more food than usual due to higher yields. In a year with above average agricultural production, even households in rainfed areas are often able to stock enough wheat for a year’s consumption for the household and earn income from sales of the wheat surplus. Agricultural labor wages in irrigated areas during the harvest time are expected to reach up to AFN 500 per day, according to local estimates. Due to good fodder availability and pasture conditions, livestock prices are likely to remain high for the rest of the year, which will strengthen the purchasing power of poor, agropastoral households.

Central Highland Provinces: Bamyan, Daikundi, and Ghor
(urban population: ~19,100 people, rural population: ~1,492,400 people)

Current Situation

This highland, mountainous region (Figure 15) is known for its high level of chronic food insecurity due to vulnerability to many natural and market-related shocks, high levels of poverty, lack of economic opportunities, and the difficult terrain hampering trade and transportation. However, 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

Figure 13. Northwestern provinces



Source: WFP

Figure 14. Irrigated wheat, Balkh District, Balkh Province, April 28



Source: FEWS NET Afghanistan

Figure 15. Central highlands provinces



Source: WFP

agricultural production of fruit, potatoes, tree nuts, and cereals, livestock husbandry, local labor, labor migration within Afghanistan, and international labor migration, often to Iran, though [this strategy is declining](#). All provinces of this region are wheat deficit areas, but Bamyan produces a surplus of potatoes which provide over half of national supply. In all three provinces, there are significant areas of both rainfed and irrigated production with primarily small-scale land holdings.

The sources of staple food in this region include own production of cereals or cereals from sharecropping which lasts up to six months, and market purchases using cash income from orchard crop sales, potato sales, livestock sales, migratory labor, local labor, and remittances. Poor households mainly rely on market purchased household stocks bought in September and October

before the arrival of winter for food for the winter and the lean season. This year's increased planted area and the good condition of other crops including orchard crops will provide more labor opportunities than usual for poor households.

The current year's irrigated and rainfed wheat planted area is higher than last year in Bamyan, but in Ghor, irrigated planted area for winter wheat has decreased from last year and is similar to 2011. In Ghor, spring wheat planted area in rainfed areas is also less than last year and likely less than 2011. Planting is ongoing in some higher elevation areas, so planted area could increase between now and the harvest in September. Currently, the major adverse shocks affecting crop production include some wheat rust, dry conditions in areas, and a high level of weeds. In general, the distribution of improved seed and fertilizers is reported to have increased in the region compared to recent years.

The standing wheat and other crops are currently in better condition than last year or 2011 in Bamyan. While it is very early in the growing season in Ghor (Figure 16), many communities reported that they expect the cereal harvest will be less than both 2012 and 2011. Half of the interviewed communities in Ghor reported that the wheat crops were in unsatisfactory condition. Livestock and pasture conditions are better than last year, and livestock prices are higher than last year due to good livestock body conditions resulting from adequate fodder in Bamyan and Daikundi. However, in Ghor, pasture conditions are reported to be not as favorable as last year and broadly similar to conditions from 2011. The lack of adequate pasture and poorer body conditions have led to a decrease in livestock prices in Ghor compared to last year.

Labor opportunities are more available and the labor wage is slightly higher than last year in Bamyan and Daikundi. In Bamyan, it was noted that both government and NGO assistance programs have been noted as significant new sources of labor opportunities. The wage rate increased in Bamyan and Daikundi, but it decreased in Ghor from last year.

Food Security Outlook

With continued seasonally normal conditions in Bamyan and Daikundi, food security will likely seasonally improve with the harvest in September unless there are major shocks. Overall, the harvest prospects for this year are for a slightly larger cereal, potato, and horticultural crops than last year. Strong local production should help mitigate further price transmission of high international wheat prices to the local market. In general, labor wages for the coming year would likely continue rising from last year due to an increased demand for agricultural labor during the harvest and competing opportunities in other parts of the country and locally. Continued high livestock prices would sustain the purchasing power of poor Kuchi (pastoralists) in the area and for most other households since livestock sales are a key source of cash for staple food purchases on markets.

The largest potential shocks that could 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 that in other regions.

Figure 16. Wheat, Taiwara District, Ghor Province, April 21



Source: FAO

In Ghor Province, it is still very early in the season due to the high elevations across the province, but the harvest is likely to be less than in the past two years. While horticultural crops such as fruits and nuts could perform satisfactorily, households would need to buy wheat flour as they would not have much wheat from their own production due to the dry conditions so far this year. If livestock prices stay lower, this is likely to further stress poor households and limit their ability to make market purchases. Potential shocks in this area include plant and livestock diseases, unusually cold weather, and a risk of summer drought during the growing season between now and September.