Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

AFGHANISTAN

Agricultural livelihoods and food security in the context of COVID-19

Monitoring report
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Abbreviations

COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FSAC	Food Security and Agriculture Cluster
GIEWS	Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock
NDVI	Normalized Difference Vegetation Index
NSIA	National Statistics and Information Authority
SFSA	Seasonal Food Security Assessment

Key highlights

> COVID-19 and other shocks

In the 12 provinces surveyed, 61 percent of the interviewed agricultural households faced various forms of idiosyncratic and covariate shocks between July and October 2020. Sickness and deaths in the family (from the coronavirus disease 2019 [COVID-19] or other causes) was the most reported shock, followed by loss of income and employment as a direct result of COVID-19-related restriction measures. Additionally, the agricultural households reported having suffered from high prices of food and non-food items, increased costs of production and insecurity arising from ongoing conflict.

> Impacts of shocks on agricultural livelihoods

Sixty percent of the surveyed crop producers faced difficulties with their production during the reporting period, mainly due to pest and crop diseases and climatic hazards. The total area planted by these producers remained more or less the same as the area planted last year, and almost half of them reported a higher or an equal level of production compared to last year.

One-third of the surveyed crop producers reported having faced problems in accessing seeds in the three months preceding the survey, mainly due to high seed prices and the availability of only low-quality seeds.

More than one-third of surveyed livestock producers also faced production difficulties, mostly arising from a lack of access to veterinary services. Also, 43 percent of livestock producers reported that the number of animals they held had decreased compared to same period last year, as they had to be sold to buy food (e.g. a negative coping mechanism).

One-quarter of the surveyed agricultural producers (both crop and livestock producers) reported having faced difficulties in selling their production in the three months preceding the survey, primarily because they were receiving low prices for their produce. The most prevalent reasons for these low prices were the constrained access to markets and the fact that traders were not coming to buy their produce anymore.

Methodology

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) leads the establishment of a data and analysis facility in the context of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and other shocks. The objective of the facility is to improve decision making in support of the food security and livelihoods of all actors in key agricultural, livestock and fisheries value chains in high-priority, food crisis countries, with a focus on producers.

Following the COVID-19 Rapid Assessment of Agriculture Production and Marketing conducted in 18 provinces between May and June 2020, FAO Afghanistan has set up an information system to monitor the impact of COVID-19 and other related shocks to generate evidence for informed decision making (FAO & MAIL, 2020). Between July and October 2020, an assessment of agricultural households was conducted through computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) in 12 provinces using a random digit dialling method. Respondents were also selected among those who had been reached in the 2019 Seasonal Food Security Assessment survey (FSAC. 2019). The assessment discussed in this report was designed to provide information on shocks, income, production, marketing, food security and assistance needs among agricultural households on the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and other shocks.

Sample design and analysis

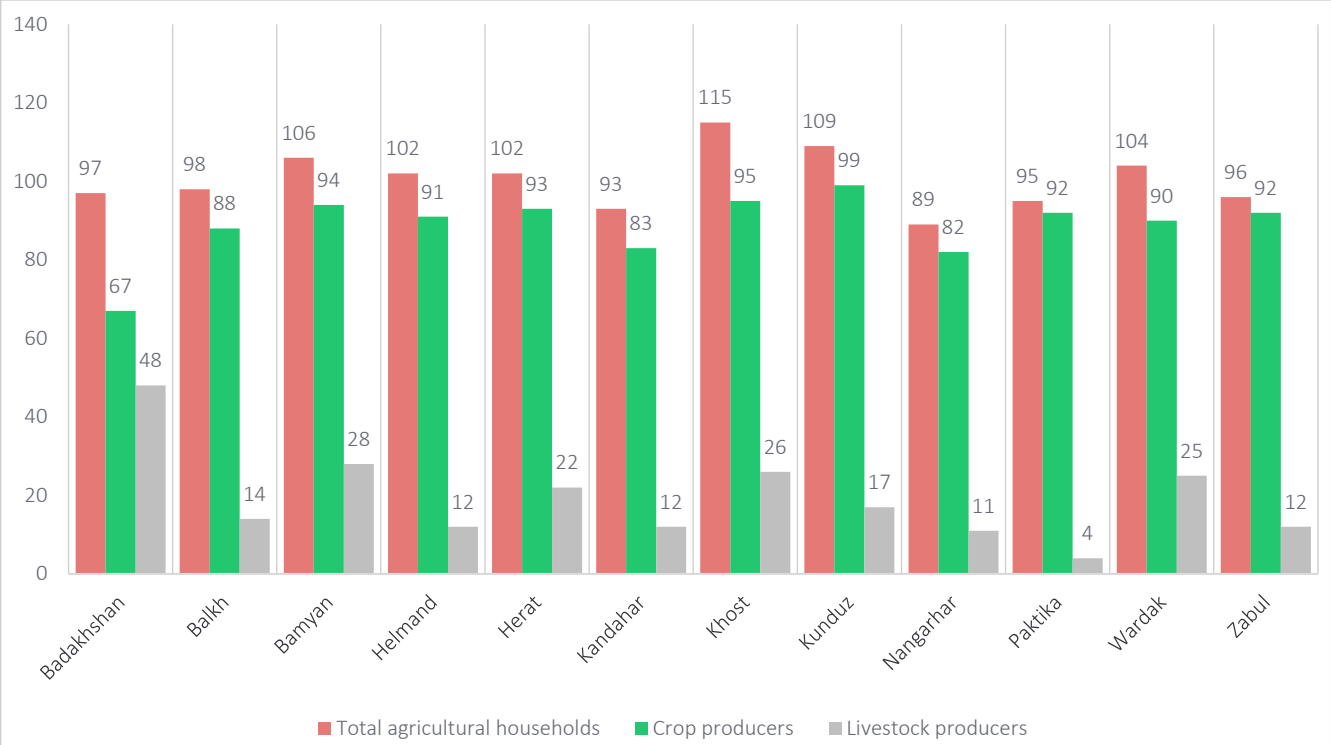
A total of 1 206 agricultural households and 325 non-agricultural households were interviewed in 12 provinces of Afghanistan between July and October 2020. The results from the sampled agricultural households have been disaggregated by the 12 provinces and by crop and livestock-producing households (Figure 1). Non-agricultural households have been excluded from the analysis due to insufficient coverage of target areas.

For the computation of agricultural household statistics, sampling weights were applied so that the proportion of agricultural households interviewed in each province matched the proportion of agricultural households in the population. The estimates for which the unweighted cell count was less than five have been removed from the results due to low reliability.

Limitations

It is worth noting that the telephone interview survey modality may have introduced a bias between respondents with and without access to phones.

Figure 1. Number of agricultural households interviewed[1]
(by province)



Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

[1] Ninety-one households were engaged equally in both crop and livestock production.

Background

For the last 40 years, Afghanistan has suffered the severe consequences of conflict, in turn resulting in the erosion of safety and security, in increased poverty levels and in stagnant development. The proportion of the population living below the national poverty line has increased from 34 percent in 2007–08 to 55 percent in 2016–17. As for the poverty gap ratio, the measure for the incidence or intensity of poverty, has also more than doubled during the same period, increasing from 7 to 15 percent (NSIA, 2018).

Conflict and natural disasters

With conflict ongoing, 2019 marked the sixth consecutive year during which civilian causalities exceeded 10 000. The number of conflict-induced internally displaced people (IDP) has increased from 369 700 in 2018 to 462 803 in 2019 (World Bank, 2020). In this light, Afghans comprise the second largest refugee population in the world, at 2.5 million (UNHCR, 2020).

Afghanistan is also highly prone to natural disasters, including droughts, floods and earthquakes. The country's INFORM Index for Risk Management of 8.1 ranks Afghanistan as the fourth highest risk country out of 191 countries profiled. It is also one of the least prepared countries against climatic shocks and the eleventh most vulnerable to climate change (European Commission Joint Research Centre, 2021). In fact, the 2018 drought directly affected more than two-thirds of the country's territory, and around 10.5 million people were among the most severely affected (FAO & MAIL, 2019).

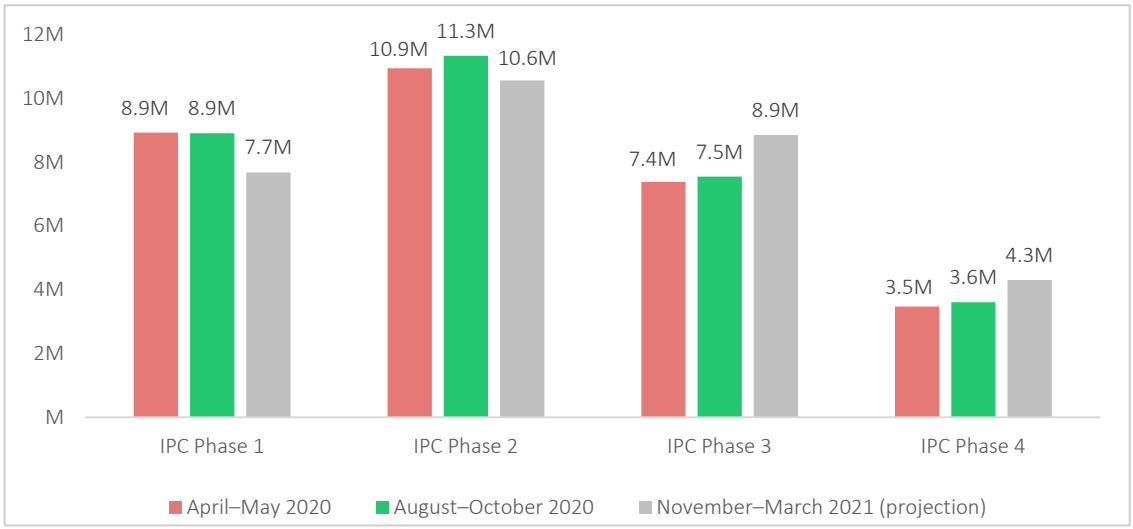
Food insecurity

Protracted conflict, natural shocks and economic hardships have had a detrimental impact on the food security and nutrition situation of the people of Afghanistan. The prevalence of undernourishment increased from 22 percent in 2012 to 30 percent in 2018 (FAO, 2020), while 41 percent of children under 5 years of age are currently estimated to be stunted, the highest prevalence in the world (UNICEF, 2020).

According to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report, between August and October 2020 an estimated 11 million people were facing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above). Furthermore, between November 2020 and March 2021, around 13.15 million people are projected to experience high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC, 2020) (Figure 2). Similarly, the recently conducted 2020 Seasonal Food Security Assessment (Food Security and Agriculture Cluster [FSAC], forthcoming) reported that around 29 percent of households were classified as having poor food consumption levels (Figure 3), which represents an increase of 5 percentage points compared to 2019 (NSIA, 2020).

Figure 2. IPC 2020 analysis (April–May and August–October) and 2021 projections

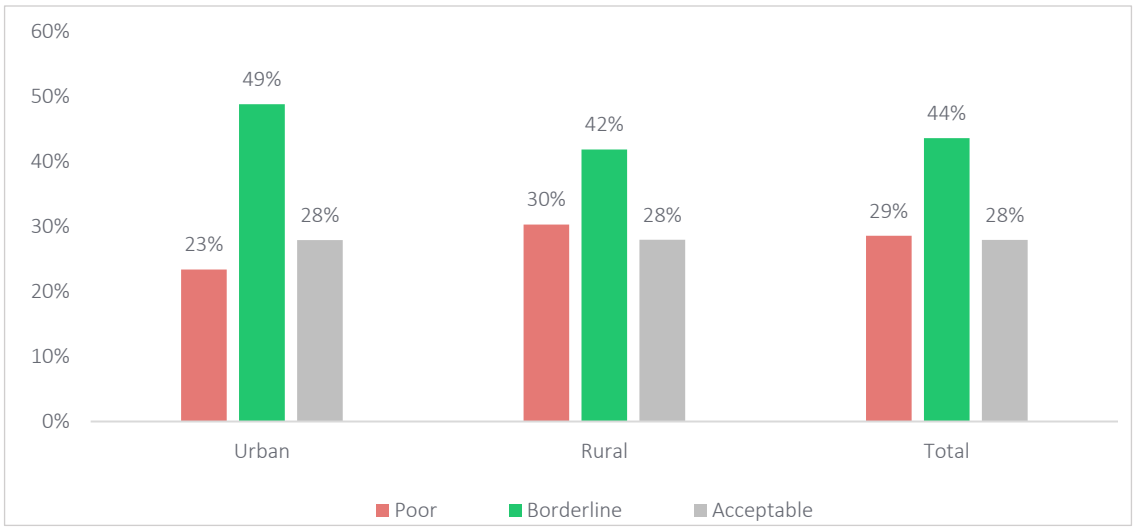
(millions of people)



Source: IPC, 2020

Figure 3. Urban and rural household food consumption levels according to 2020 Seasonal Food Security Assessment

(percentage of households)

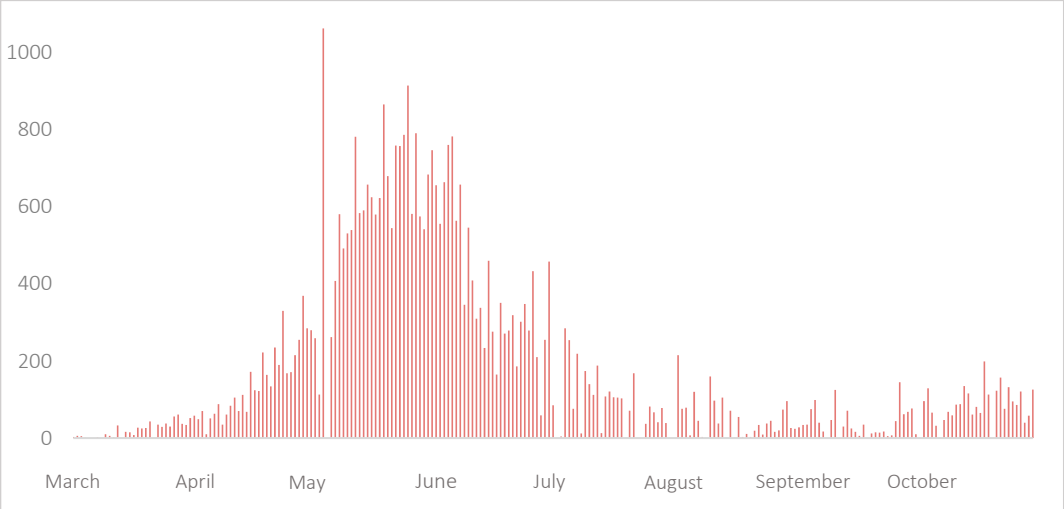


Source: FSAC, forthcoming

COVID-19 and other risk factors in the country

As of 5 December 2020, there were 47 388 confirmed COVID-19 cases in Afghanistan across all 34 provinces and 1 847 deaths. The peak period for daily was observed around June, when more than 700 daily cases were recorded (Figure 4). The cases began to decrease from July onwards (IMF, 2020).

Figure 4. New daily reported COVID-19 cases (March 2020–November 2020)



Source: Our World in Data, 2020.

As recently as October 2020, however, the number of cases started to increase again, with the Ministry of Public Health expecting that about 90 000 people become infected during the winter season (IMF, 2020).

As the country braces for a second wave of infections, the Government implemented containment measures, such as closing high-density public areas and wedding halls across the country. Schools and universities that were opened in August were also closed again in November 28 (World Bank, 2020).

Economic impact

Due to COVID-19, the World Bank reports that Afghanistan's economy is set to contract by between 5.5 to 7.4 percent in 2020. It also warns that the proportion of Afghans living in poverty may increase from 55 percent in 2017 to between 61 and 72 percent in 2020, as incomes decline and prices of food and non-food commodities continue to rise (IMF, 2020). According to recent IPC analyses, food prices have risen unseasonably during the harvest season, in turn negatively impacting household purchasing power (IPC, 2020).

Impact on agriculture

More than 50 percent of millers and processing units were reported to be highly impacted and either operating at reduced capacities or having closed altogether, according to the FAO and Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) rapid assessment in June 2020. Poultry and livestock farmers across all provinces also reported

having faced significant challenges, including a lack of access to day-old chicks and/or pullets, as well as to feed, inputs and resources, markets and veterinary services (FAO & MAIL, 2020). Furthermore, according to the 2020 Seasonal Food Security Assessment survey (FSAC, forthcoming), around 90 percent of farmers with access to agricultural land reported that they will not have access to certified wheat seeds, while another 66 percent said that they will not have access to wheat seeds at all for the next cultivation season (IPC, 2020).

Other risk factors

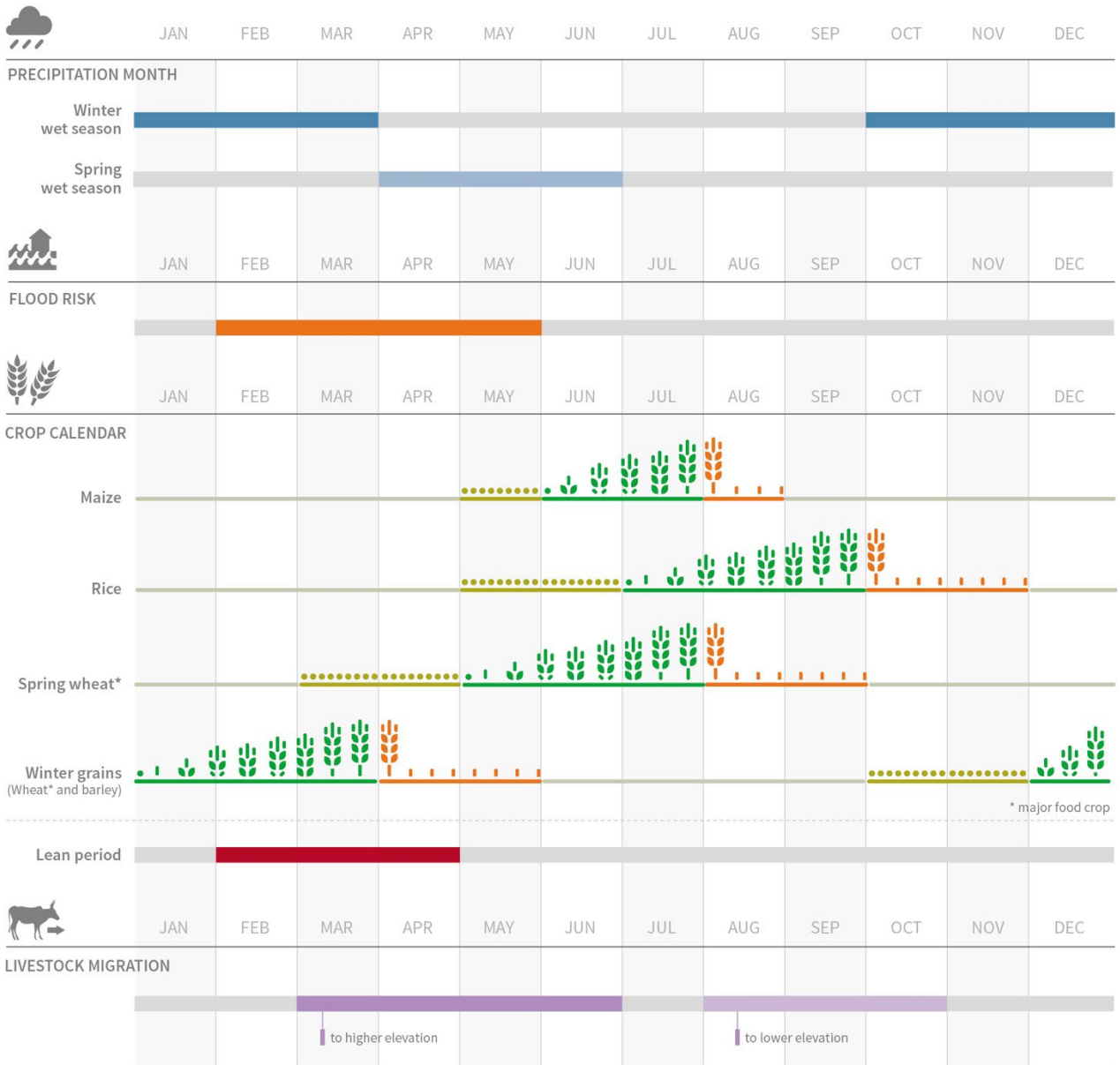
The 2020 IPC report highlights the ongoing conflict as one of the major driving factors behind recent increases in acute food insecurity. From January to September 2020, a total of 5 939 civilians were directly affected by the conflict, of whom 2 117 were killed and 3 822 wounded from the ongoing fighting. This has led to displacement of people and has impacted their livelihoods, some of which have been lost altogether. As a result, farmers have lacked access to their agricultural lands for cultivation and harvesting at the right time, with a similar effect reported among livestock producers and other sectors (IPC, 2020).

Agricultural production

In Afghanistan, agriculture accounts for about 26 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and employs about 43 percent of the labour force (Central Statistics Organization of Afghanistan, 2020). Cereals, mainly wheat, are the predominant crops grown, covering 30 percent of all cultivated land with an annual production of about 5 million tonnes. Vegetables and tubers are cultivated on 5 percent of the land, of which potatoes and onions make up the largest part. Additionally, the cultivation of orchards and fruits has recently been increasing as key cash crops (FAO, 2020b).

In Aghanistan, the typical lean season lasts for four months, from January to April (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Afghanistan seasonal calendar highlighting major agricultural activities



Source: FAO, 2020b; FAO Afghanistan

Crop production

A total of 1 066 crop producers were interviewed to a get better understanding of their current situation and of the difficulties they have faced due to COVID-19 and other shocks.

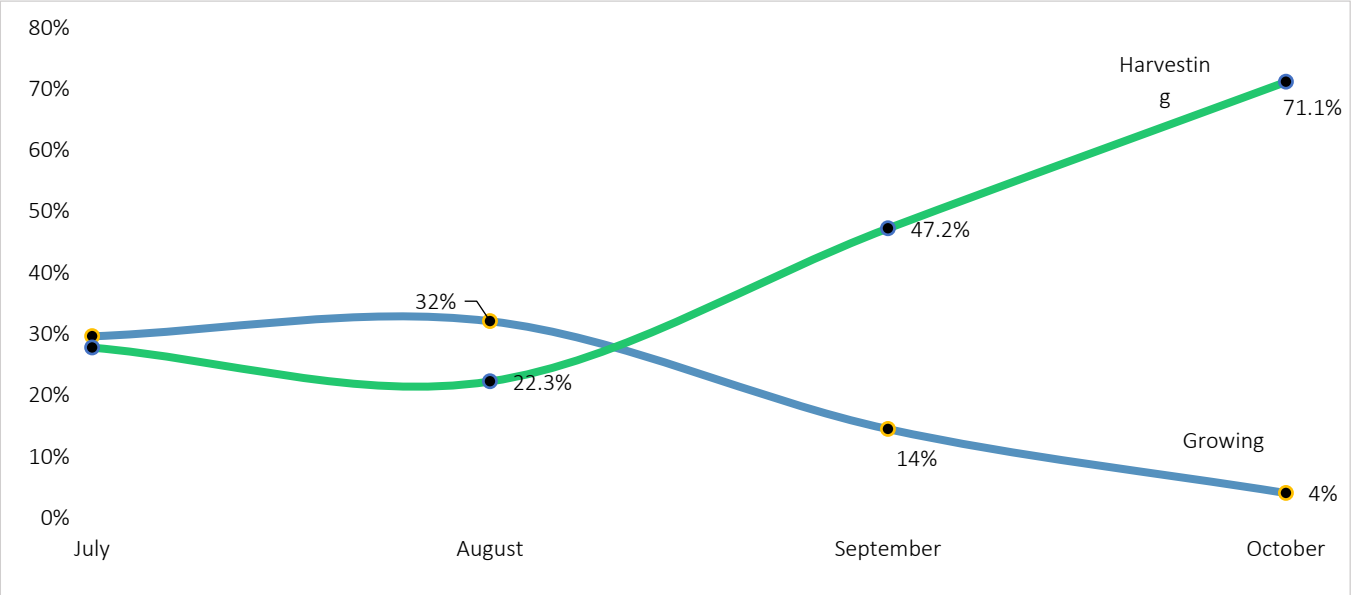
Across the 12 provinces surveyed, between the period July and October, fruits and maize were the most frequently reported crops, grown by 22.4 and 22.1 percent of crop producers, respectively. This was followed by wheat (16 percent) and vegetables (13 percent).

Area planted

Compared to last year, the area planted for crops remained the same across the 12 surveyed provinces, as reported by 83 percent of the surveyed households (Figure 7). Only 7 percent of agricultural households reported planting smaller areas compared to last year, with no significant differences noticed between provinces. In Bamyan, however, 18 percent of crop producers reported having planted smaller areas compared to the previous year.

Figure 6. Proportion of surveyed crop-producing households conducting agricultural activities[2]

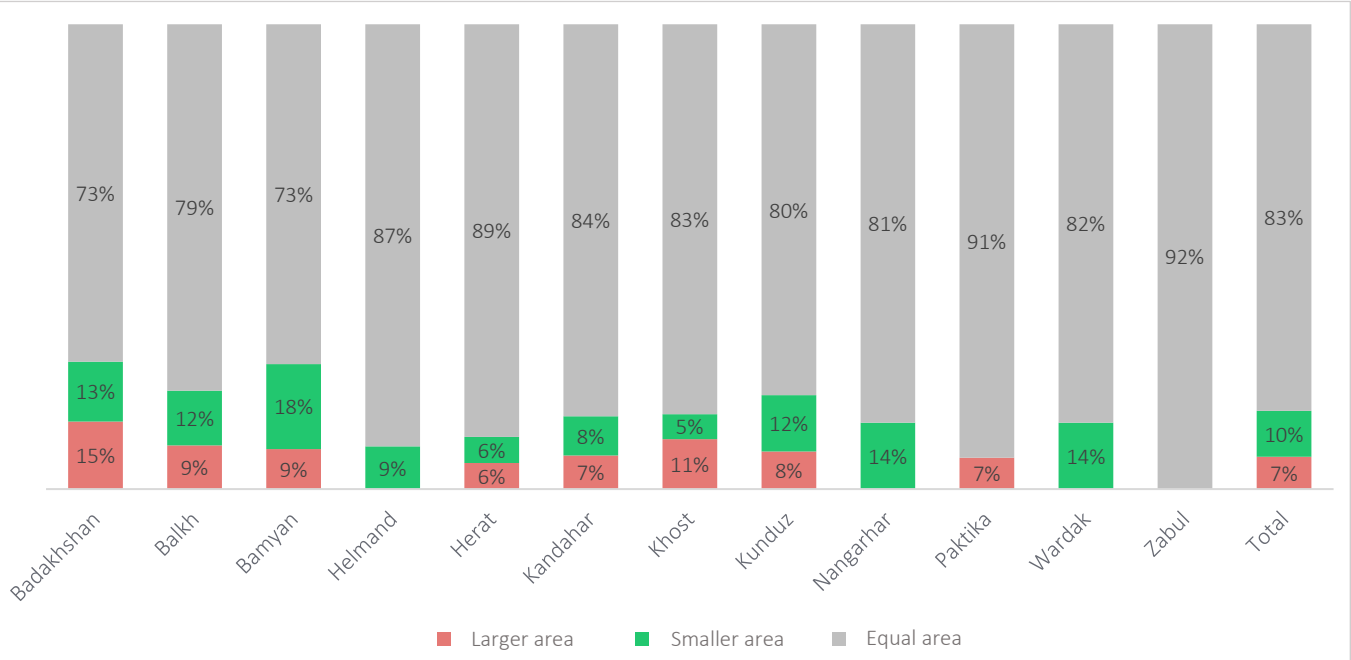
(July–October 2020)



Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Figure 7. Proportion of surveyed crop-producing households reporting planted areas larger or smaller than, or equal to, last year's

(by province)



Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

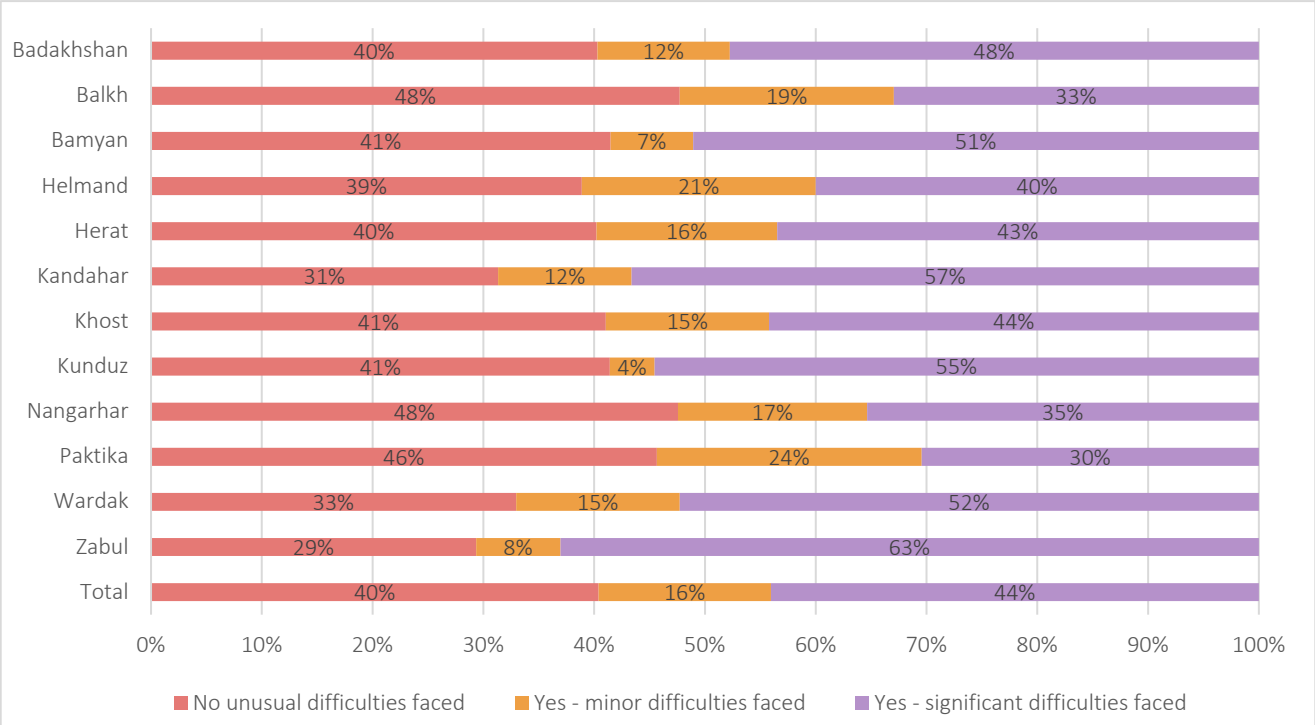
[2] The majority of surveyed crop producers had harvested their crops by October.

Difficulties in crop production

A total of 60 percent of crop producers surveyed reported having faced difficulties with their production in the three months preceding the survey (Figure 8). The highest proportion of farmers facing difficulties was from Zabul province, while the lowest was from Balkh and Nangarhar provinces. Among crop producers who faced difficulties, the event that was most frequently reported as the main reason for this was the outbreak of crop diseases and pests, followed by natural hazards, such as heavy rains and floods (Figure 9). It is noteworthy that even amidst the pandemic, land access restrictions seemed to have played a minor role compared to the chronic problems faced by the rural farmers.

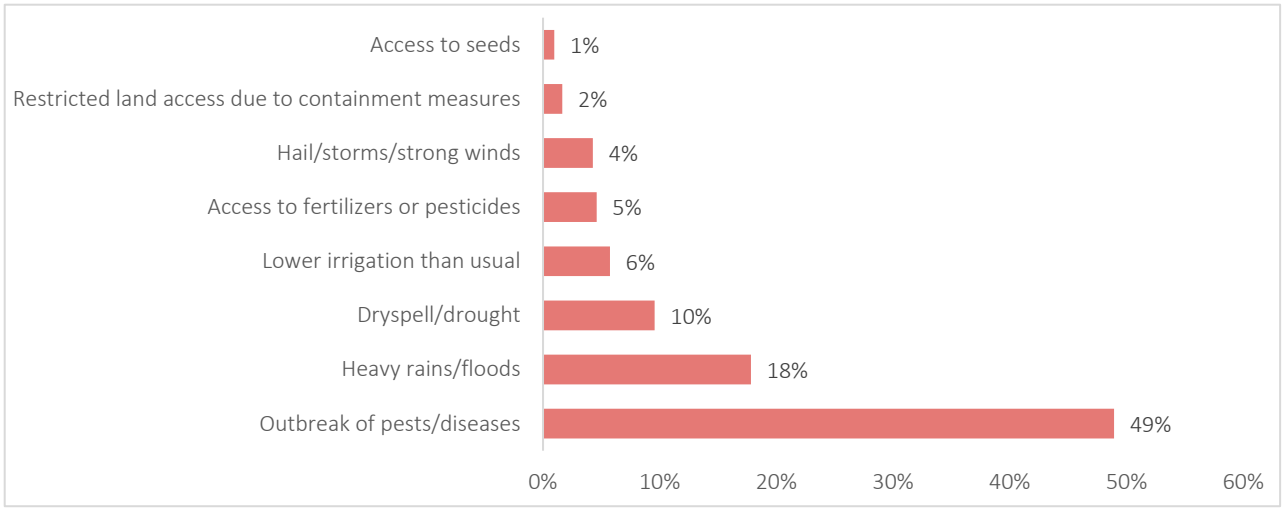
Figure 8. Proportion of surveyed crop-producing households reporting difficulties with their production in the three months prior to the survey

(percentage of crop-producing households, by province)



Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Figure 9. Main difficulty in production reported by surveyed crop-producing households
(among those who reported difficulties)

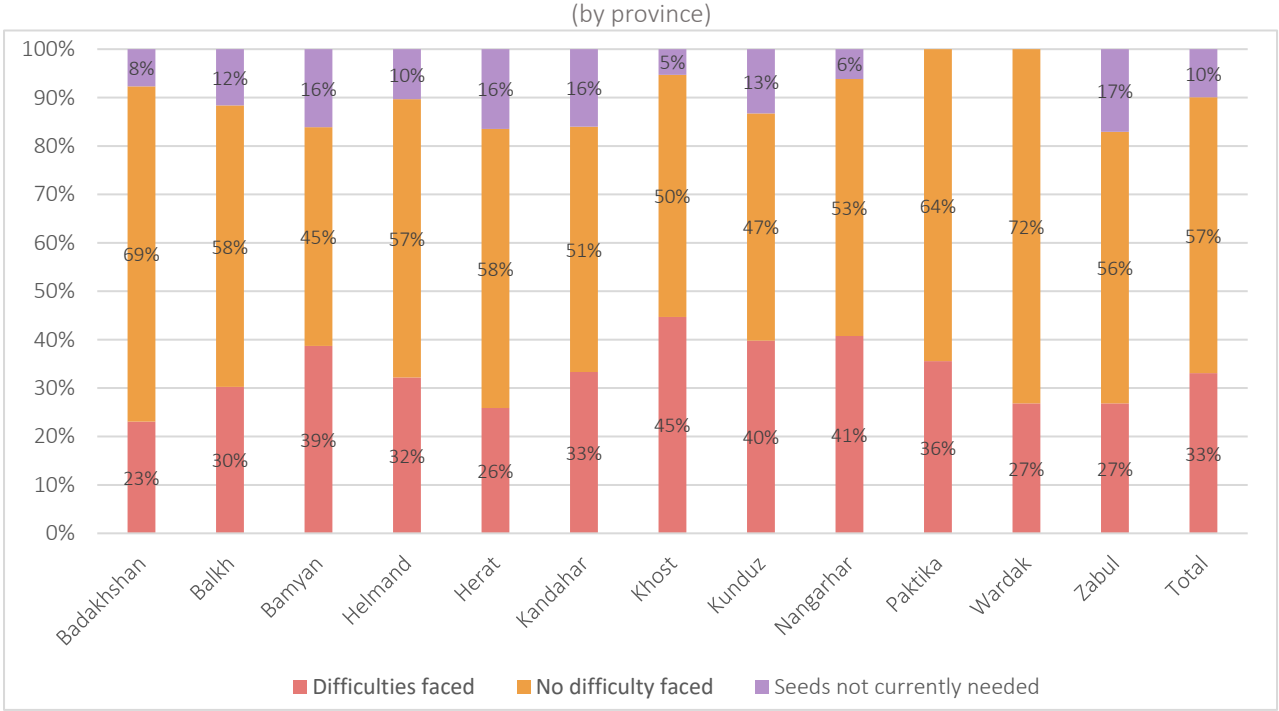


Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Difficulties accessing seeds

While the access to seeds was not reported by crop produces as the main difficulty they faced as frequently as other difficulties in the three months preceding the survey, when specifically asked, one-third of crop-producing households confirmed their difficulty accessing them (Figure 10). This proportion was found to be more or less similar across all of 12 provinces. However, according to reports from surveyed households, the difficulty in accessing seeds seemed more prevalent in the Khost and Nangarhar provinces compared to others.

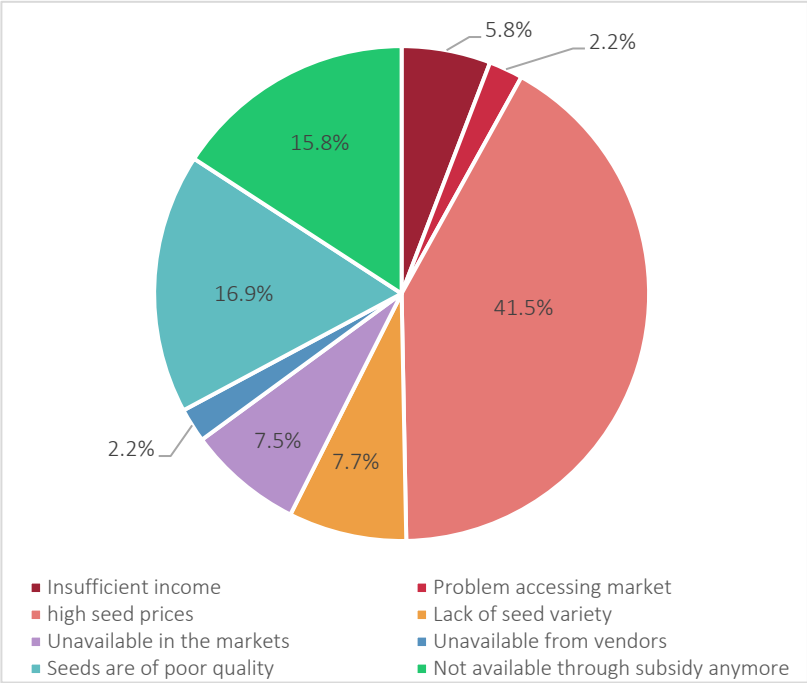
Figure 10. Proportion of surveyed crop-producing households reporting difficulties in accessing seeds in the three months prior to the survey
(by province)



Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Moreover, among those crop-producing households reporting difficulties in accessing seeds, 42 percent stressed the high price of seeds as the leading reason (Figure 11). A secondary reported reason among crop producers was the fact that seeds that were available to them were of poor quality, as reported by 17 percent of them. A third reported reason (reported by 16 percent of crop-producing households) stemmed from the fact that the subsidies or aid through which they obtained seeds were no longer available to them.

Figure 11. Reasons reported by crop-producing households for their difficulties in accessing seeds



Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

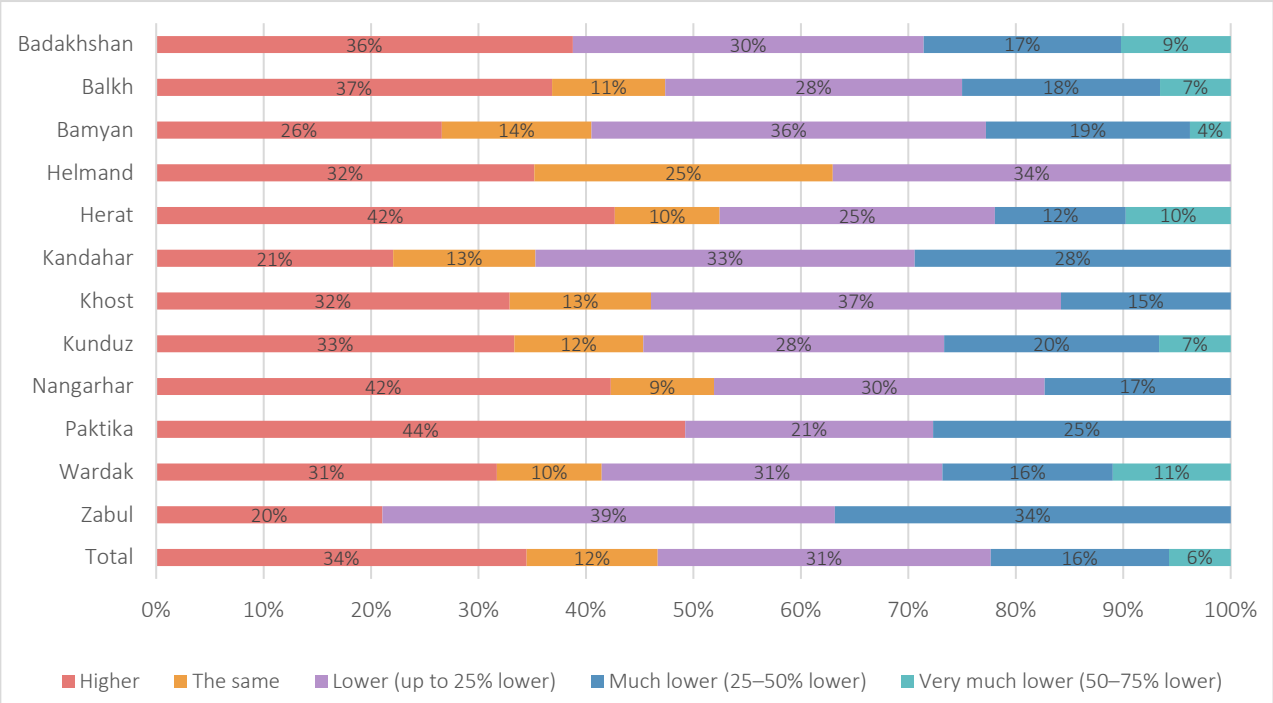
Crop production situation

Slightly more than half of crop-producing households interviewed reported that they had or were expecting lower production levels compared to a normal year, while 46 percent of them reported increased or equal levels of production this year in comparison to other years (Figure 12).

The FAO Global Information and Early Warning System for Food and Agriculture (GIEWS) forecast for May 2020 pointed to an above-average cereal production of around 5.7 million tonnes, with weather conditions deemed as generally favourable for crop development. The Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) anomaly map for Afghanistan for September 2020 (Figure 13), relative to long-term averages, also indicated an enhanced level of vegetation (FAO, 2020b).

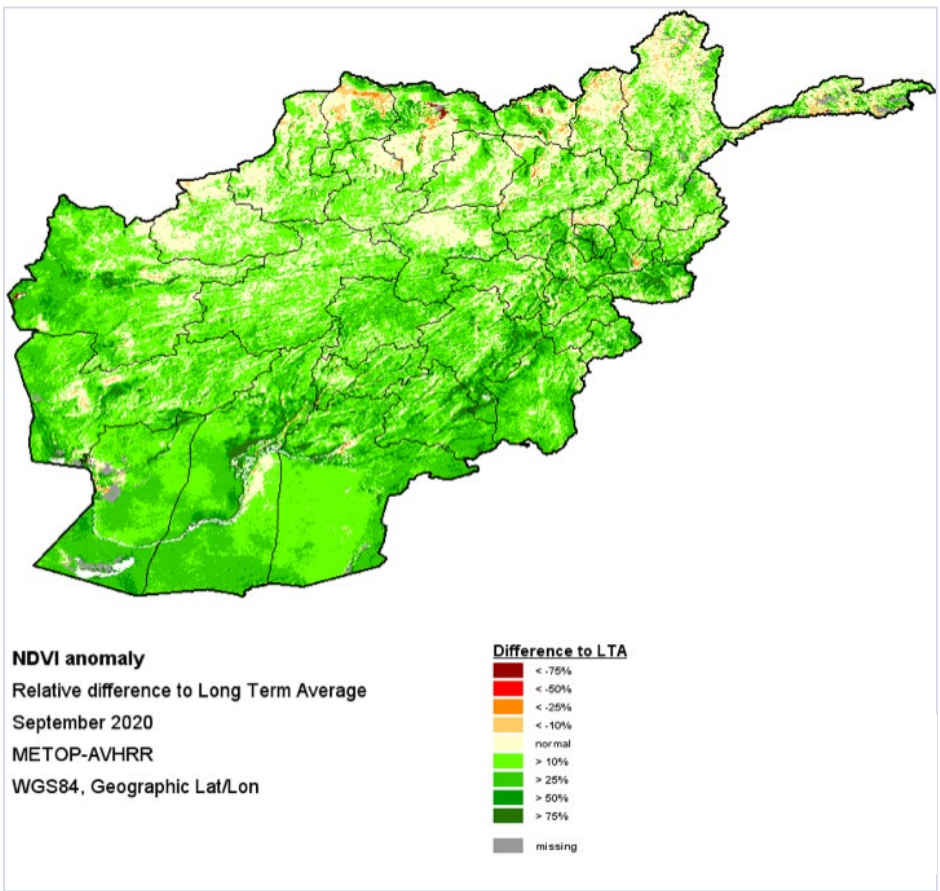
Figure 12. Proportion of surveyed crop-producing households reporting changes in their production levels compared to previous years

(by province)



Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Figure 13. Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) anomaly map (September 2020)

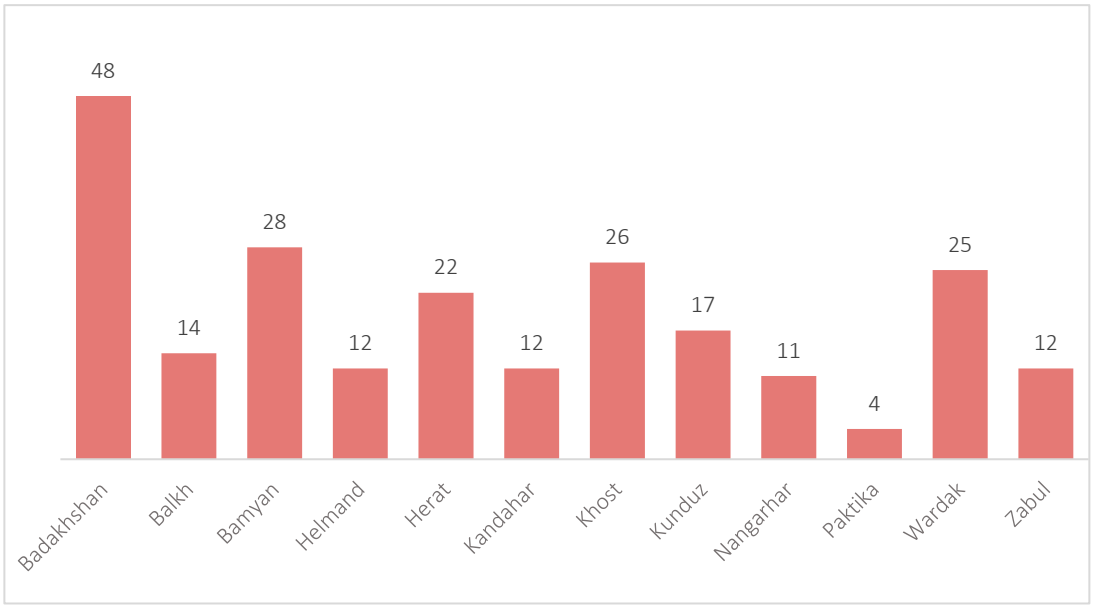


Source: FAO GIEWS, September 2020

Livestock production

A total of 231 livestock-producing households across 12 provinces were interviewed as part of this assessment (Figure 14). Given the small number of surveyed households, all subsequent results in this report concerning livestock producers have not been disaggregated by province.

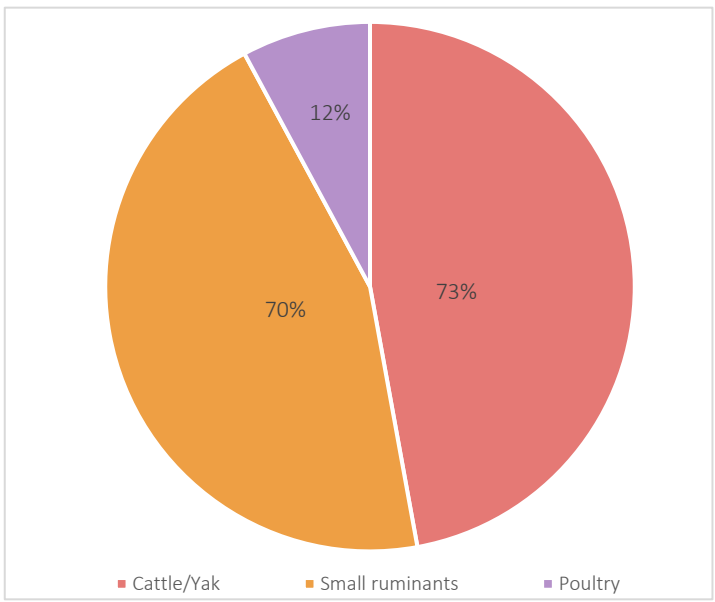
Figure 14. Number of livestock-producing households interviewed
(by province)



Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Most of these surveyed households owned cattle and small ruminants (Figure 15), with the average number of livestock heads owned per household being around five cattle and 37 small ruminants.

Figure 15. Livestock ownership among surveyed livestock-producing households
(percentage of households)

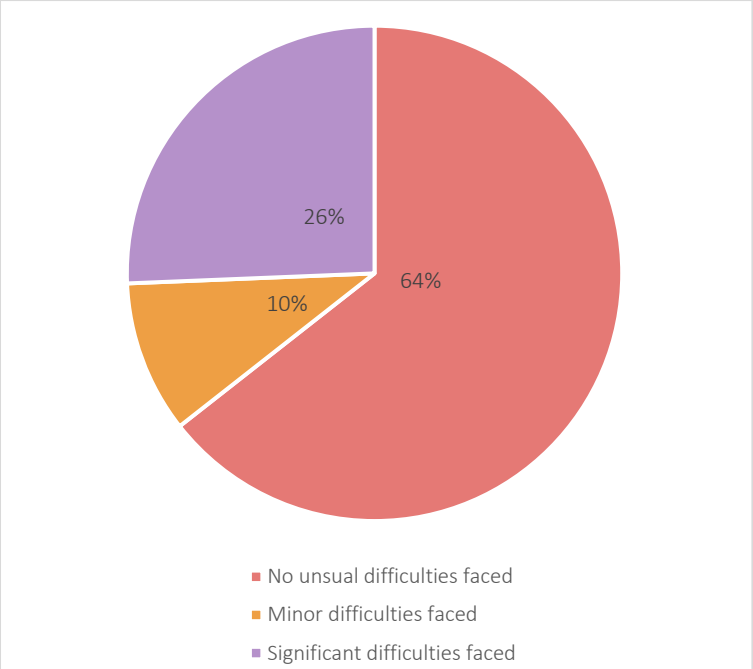


Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Difficulties in livestock production

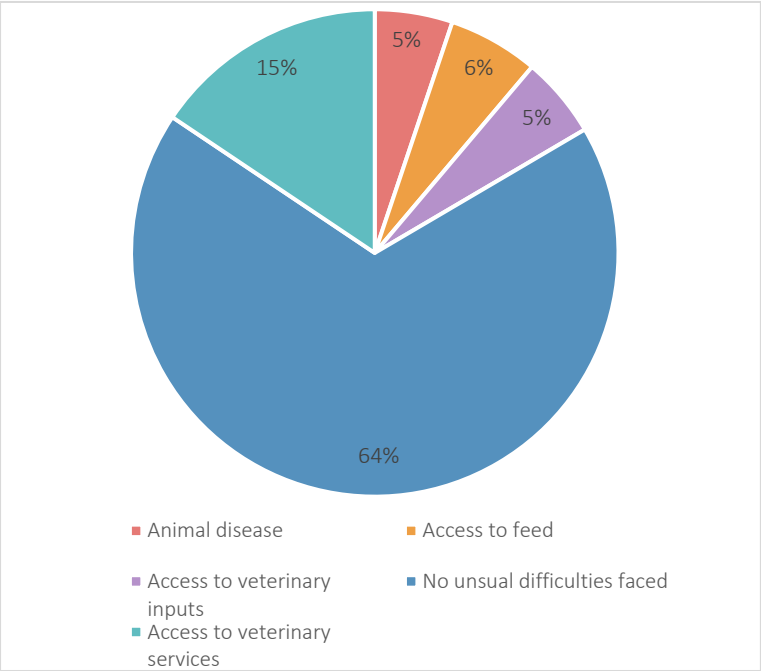
More than one-third of surveyed livestock-producing households reported facing either minor or significant difficulties in raising livestock during the three months prior to the survey (Figure 16). The most frequently cited obstacle among these households was the difficulty in accessing veterinary services (Figure 17).

Figure 16. Proportion of surveyed livestock-producing households reporting having faced difficulties in the three months prior to the survey



Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

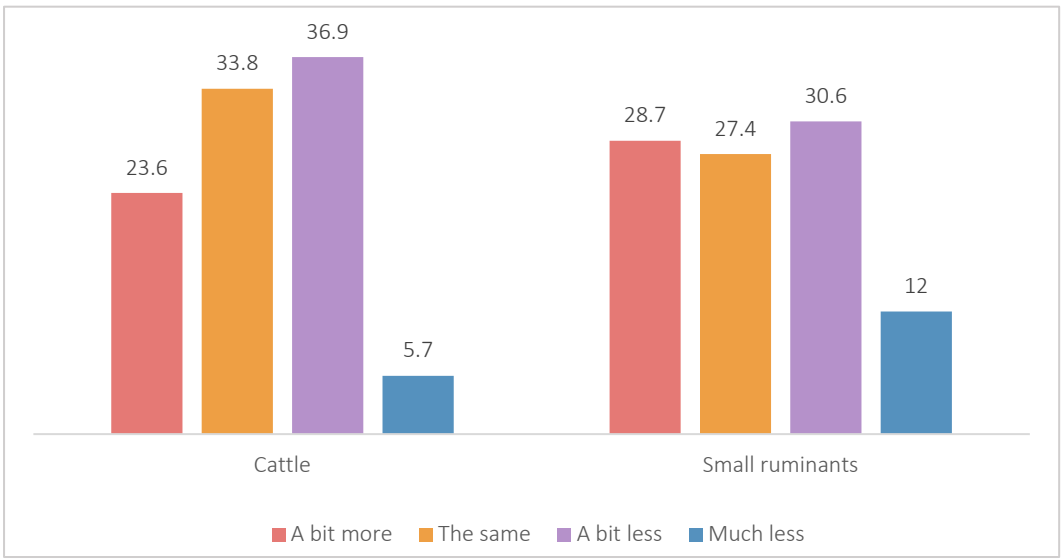
Figure 17. Types of difficulties reported by surveyed livestock-producing households



Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

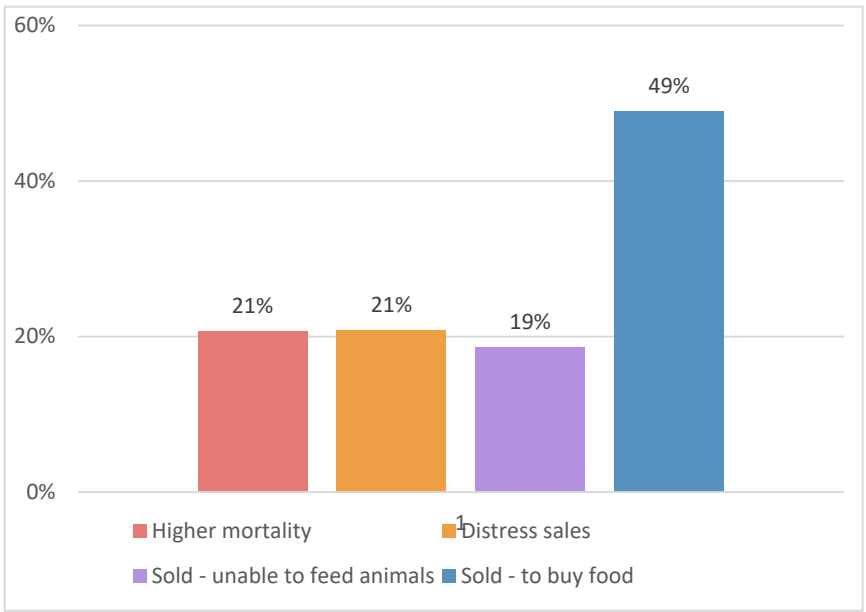
Around 43 percent of livestock-producing households reported a reduction in their herds compared to the same time last year (Figure 18). This proportion was similar overall between cattle and small ruminant owners. When asked about the reason for this reduction in their herds, almost half of these households reported that they had sold their animals as a negative coping mechanism in order to be able to afford food (Figure 19).

Figure 18. Proportion of surveyed livestock-owning households having reported changes in their livestock herd numbers, compared to the same time last year
(by degree of change in herd numbers and type of livestock)



Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Figure 19. Reasons reported by surveyed livestock-producing households who experienced reductions in their herd numbers, compared to the same time last year

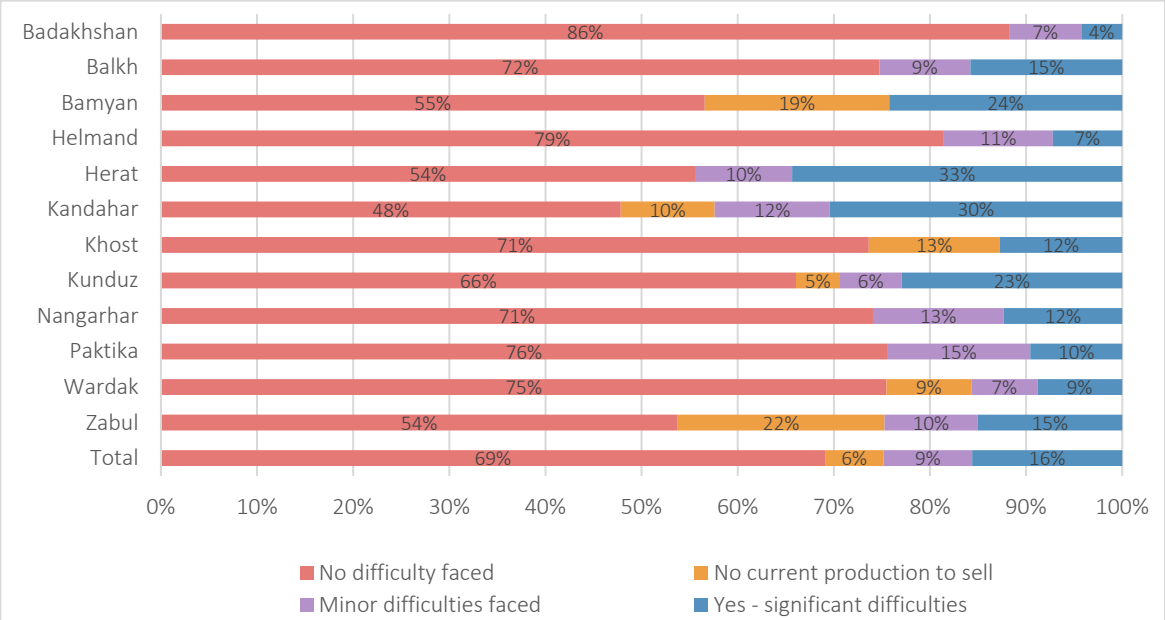


Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Agricultural marketing

Throughout the 12 provinces surveyed between July and October 2020, one-quarter of the interviewed agricultural producers (both crop and livestock-producing households) faced unusual difficulties in selling their production in the three months prior to the survey. The prevalence of these reported difficulties was highest among surveyed households from the Kandahar and Herat provinces (42 percent and 43 percent), respectively (Figure 20).

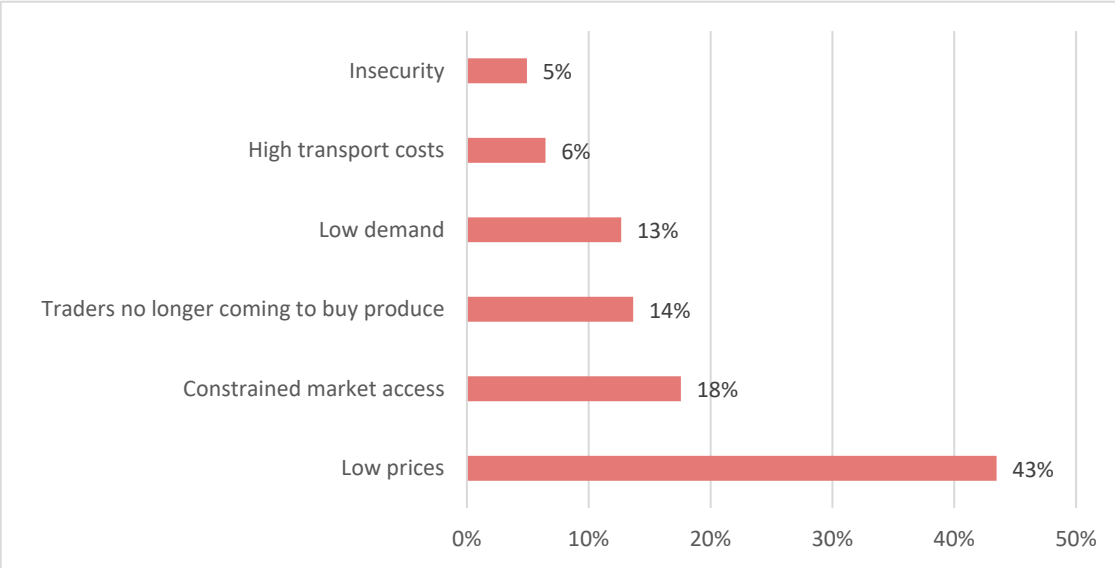
Figure 20. Proportion of surveyed agricultural households reporting difficulties in selling their production three months prior to the survey (by province)



Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Of those households who reported having faced unusual difficulties during this period, 43 percent identified the lower-than expected prices for their production as the main reason for their difficulties (Figure 21). The other most prevalent reasons reported were the constrained access to markets and the fact that usual traders were no longer coming to purchase their production.

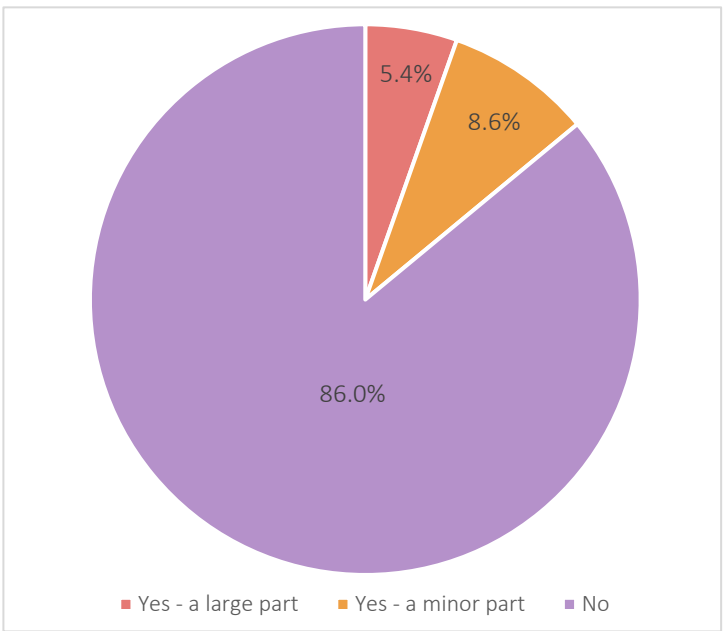
Figure 21. Reasons reported among surveyed agricultural households who faced difficulties in selling their production in the three months prior to the survey
(percentage of households)



Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Given these and other difficulties faced by agricultural households, the survey also revealed that 14 percent of agricultural producers resorted to destroying their production altogether, as they were unable to sell it in a timely fashion or to preserve it in order to sell at a future date (Figure 22).

Figure 22. Proportion of surveyed agricultural households reporting whether or not they engaged in destroying their production

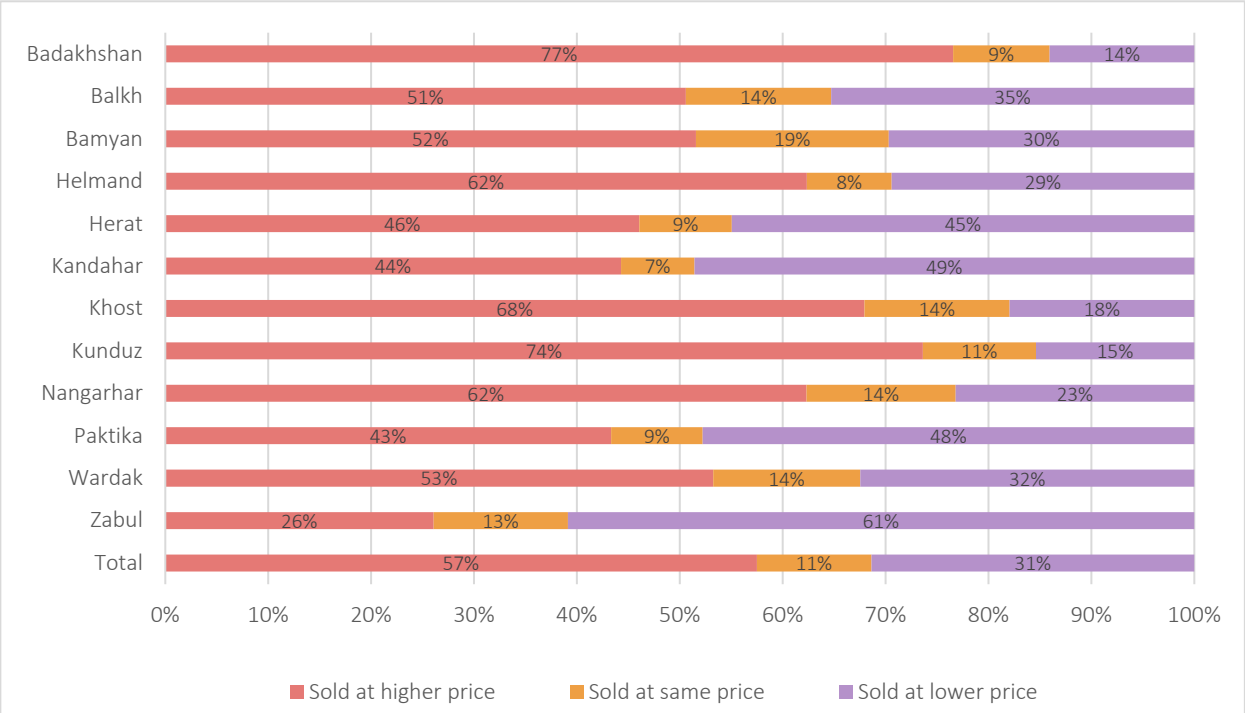


Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

With 43 percent of agricultural households having reported difficulties in marketing their production, as shown before (Figure 21), it is unsurprising that almost one-third of agricultural producers reported selling their production at lower prices compared to the same period last year. The vast majority of these producers were located in the Zabul (61 percent), Kandahar (49 percent), Paktika (48 percent) and Heart (45 percent) provinces (Figure 23).

Conversely, a large proportion of surveyed agricultural producers reported having been able to sell their production at higher prices compared to those from the year before. This occurred mostly in the Badakhshan (77 percent) and Kunduz (74 percent) provinces.

Figure 23. Proportion of surveyed agricultural households reporting changes in their selling prices compared to the same period last year
(percentage of households)

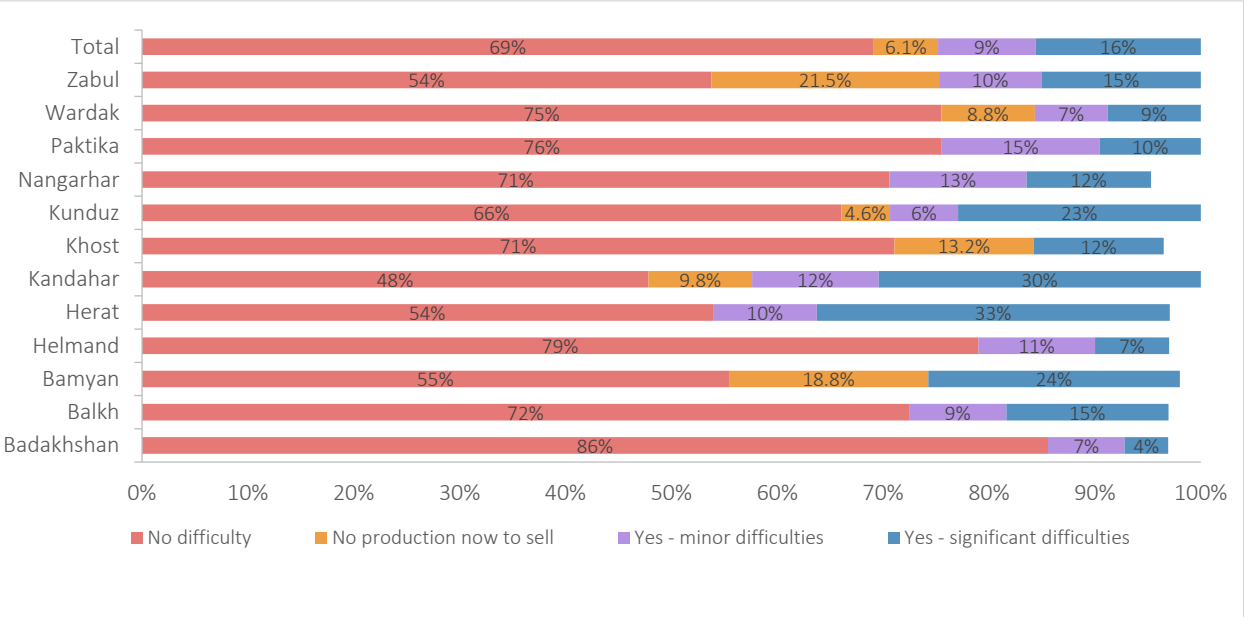


Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Food supply and markets

In the 12 provinces surveyed between July and October, one quarter of the interviewed agricultural producers (including both crop and livestock producers) faced unusual difficulties selling their production in the months prior to the survey (Figure 24). Difficulties were reported most frequently among respondents from the provinces of Kandahar and Herat (42 percent and 43 percent of agricultural households respectively).

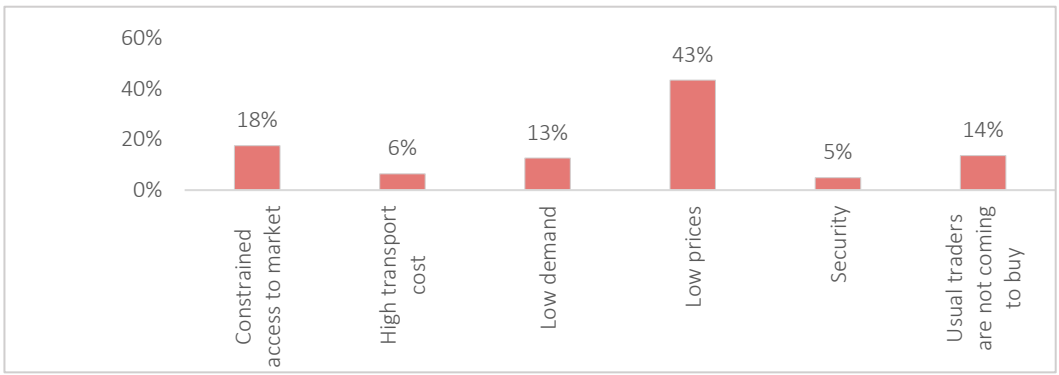
Figure 24. Proportion of surveyed agricultural households reporting difficulties selling their production
(percentage of households)



Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Of the unusual difficulties faced, 43 percent of households reported that they were receiving lower than expected prices for their produce. The other most prevalent difficulties were constrained access to markets and traders no longer coming to buy the produce (Figure 25).

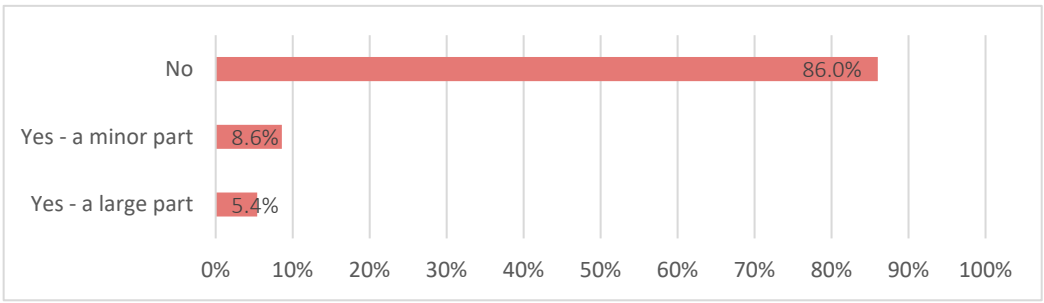
Figure 25. Proportion of surveyed agricultural households reporting reasons of difficulties in selling their production



Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Fourteen percent of the agricultural producers surveyed reported that they had to destroy their produce as they were unable to sell it or preserve it for future sell (Figure 26).

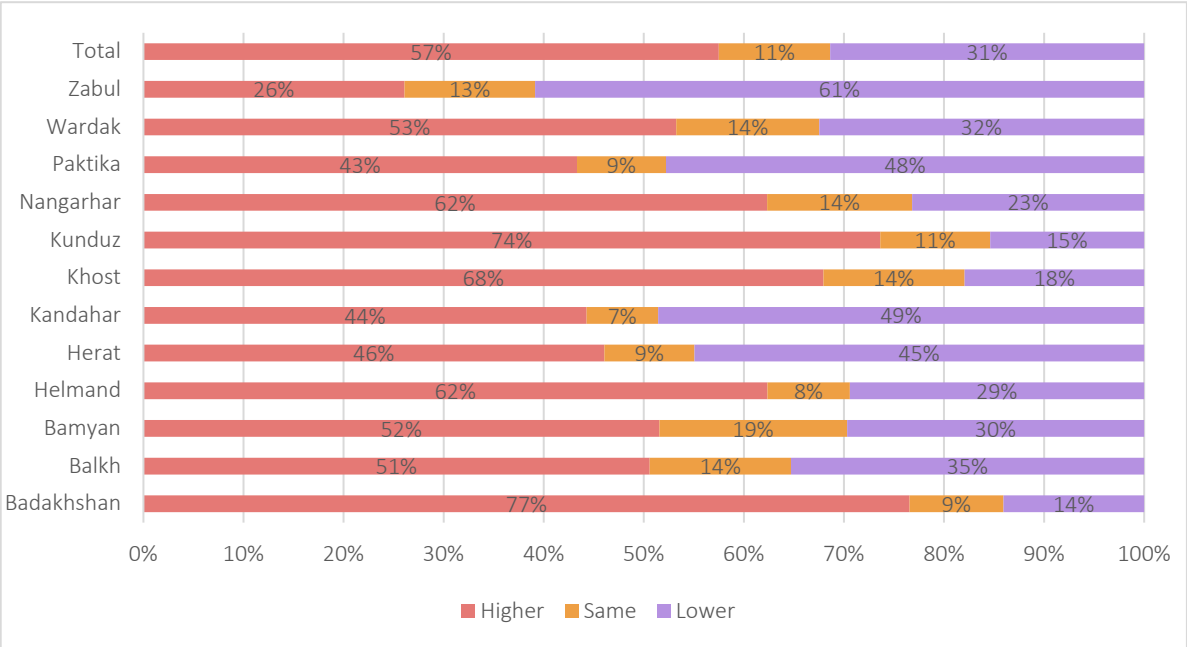
Figure 26. Proportion of surveyed agricultural households reported having destroyed their produce



Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Almost one-third of interviewed agricultural households reported selling their produce at lower prices compared to the same period last year, mostly in Zabul, Kandahar and Herat provinces. A significant proportion of households were able to sell at a higher price compared to last year. This occurred mostly in Badakhshan and Kunduz provinces.

Figure 27. Proportion of households reporting change in selling price compared to same period last year

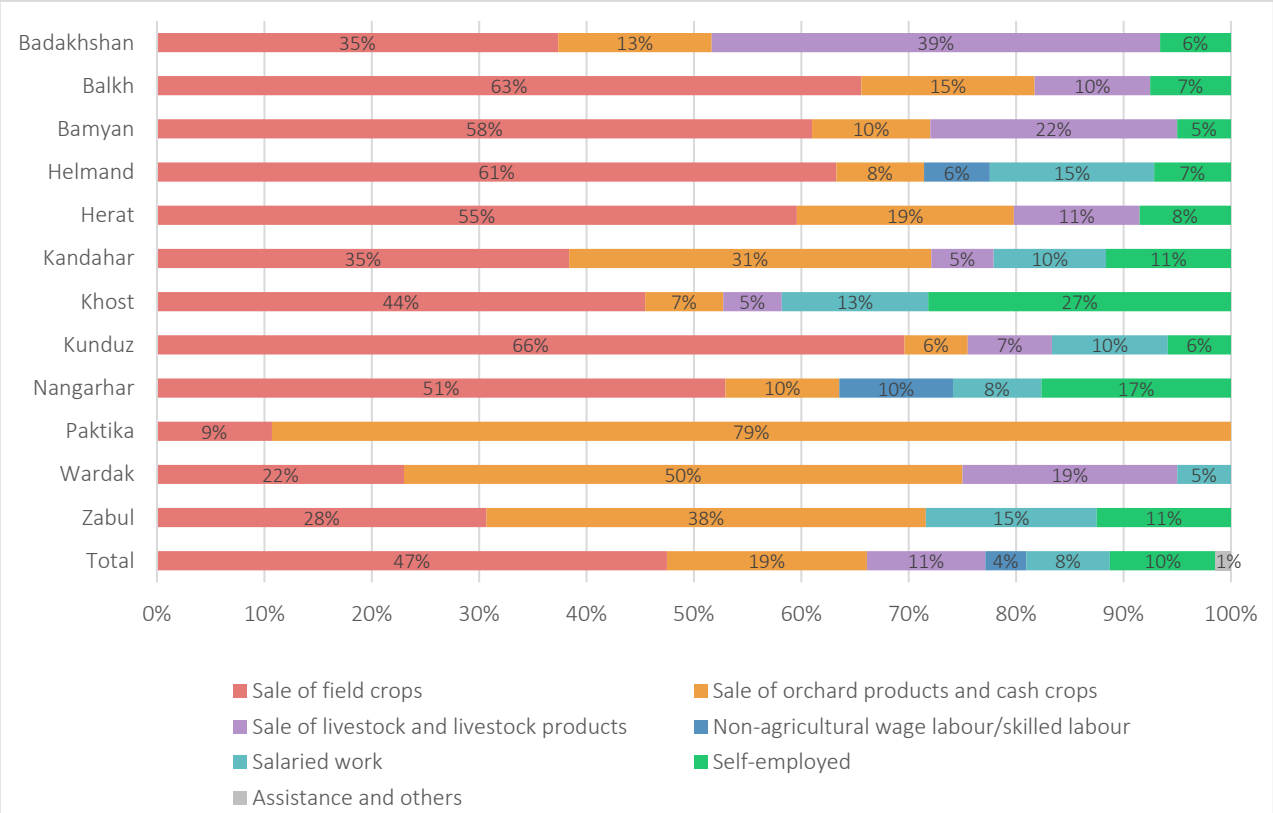


Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Livelihoods, incomes and coping strategies

In terms of the main sources of income among the surveyed households, they reported that the sales of their own production were their primary source of income during the three months preceding the survey (Figure 28). In addition to this, the surveyed households also reported having engaged in non-agricultural activities during this period, such as salaried work, self-employment and non-agricultural wage labour.

Figure 28. Main sources of income in the three months prior to the survey, as reported by surveyed agricultural households
(percentage of households, by province)

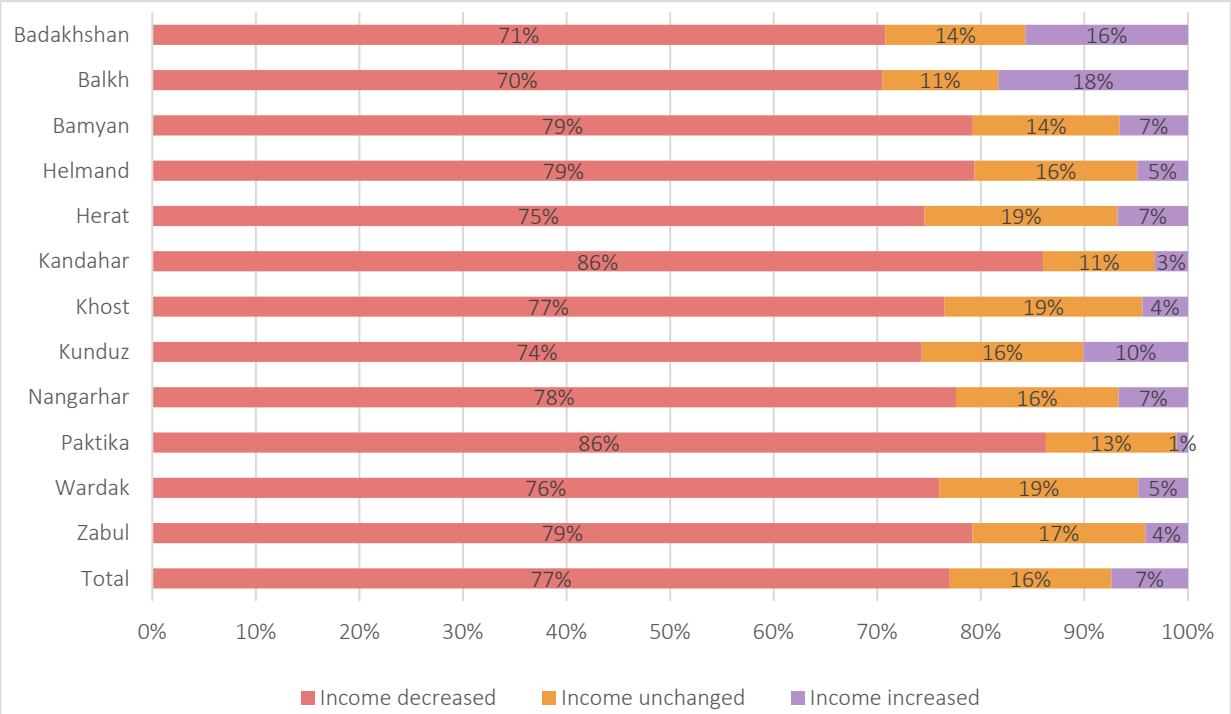


Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Changes in income

When asked about the change in their levels of income in the last three months compared to same period last year, 77 percent of agricultural households reported that their income had decreased. This decrease in income was fairly uniform across all 12 surveyed provinces (Figure 29).

Figure 29. Proportion of surveyed agricultural households reporting changes in income in the three months prior to the survey, compared to the same period last year
(percentage of households, by province)



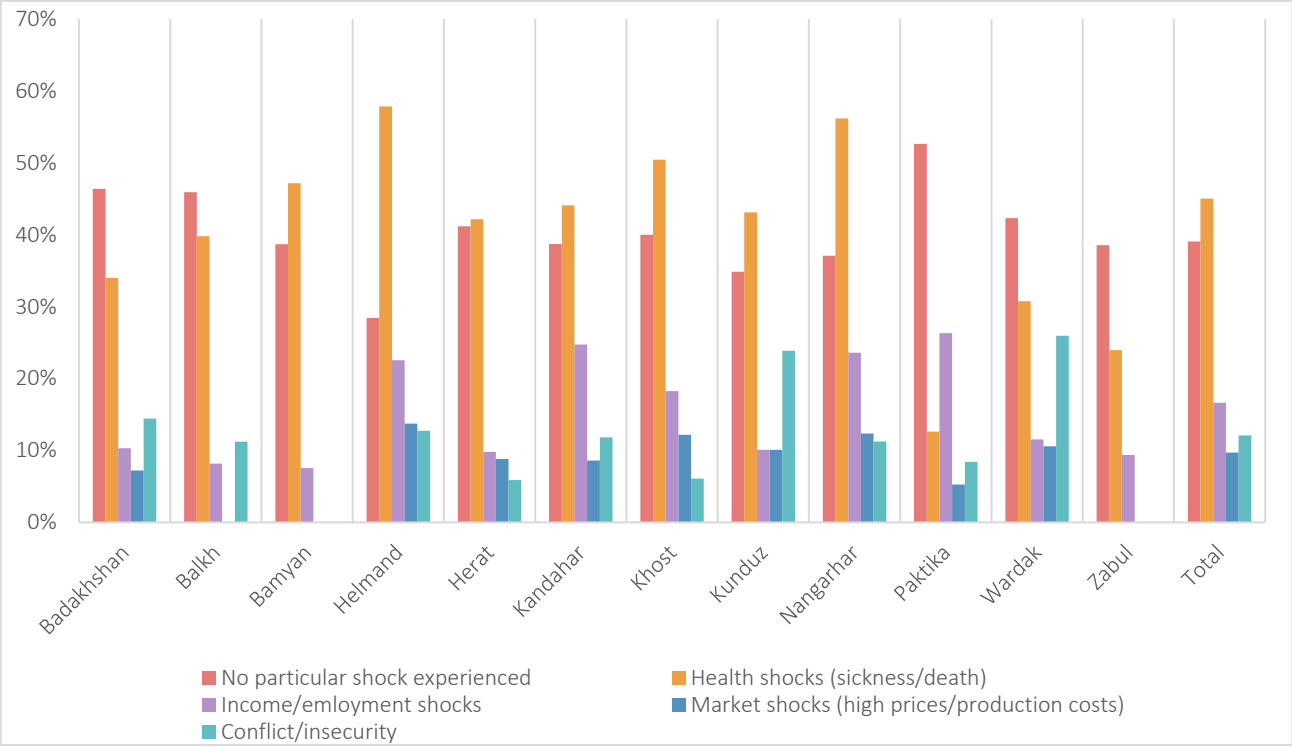
Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Shocks experienced

A total of 61 percent of agricultural households interviewed reported having experienced shocks, in particular in the Helmand province. The most prevalent shock reported was the sickness or death of household members (Figure 30).

Figure 30. Various types of shocks reported by surveyed agricultural households in the three months prior to the survey

(percentage of households, by province)



Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

In terms of shocks specific to food security and nutrition, across the 12 provinces surveyed, 72 percent of surveyed households reported having consumed smaller amounts of meat compared to the same period during usual times (Table 1). This was followed by 40 percent of surveyed households reporting having eaten fewer fruits and 36 percent having eaten fewer eggs.

Table 1. Proportion of surveyed agricultural households reporting reduced consumption of various food groups/items in three months preceding the survey

Province	Cereals (%)	Roots/tubers (%)	Vegetables (%)	Fruits (%)	Meat (%)	Eggs (%)	Pulses/nuts (%)	Milk/milk products (%)	Oils/fats (%)	Sugar/honey (%)
Badakhshan	16	17	23	36	77	51	32	17	16	13
Balkh	38	18	40	54	76	39	40	39	37	33
Bamyan	30	14	25	43	77	47	39	42	29	24
Helmand	24	30	25	44	78	27	30	22	23	20
Herat	25	22	25	32	65	42	30	22	27	14
Kandahar	27	34	27	31	61	32	55	20	28	26
Khost	8	44	12	51	79	26	25	11	10	9
Kunduz	8	17	7	40	72	39	32	12	7	8
Nangarhar	17	43	16	42	74	28	27	23	18	16
Paktika	27		35	31	70	33	31	21	30	26
Wardak	31	9	42	39	62	49	53	28	31	21
Zabul	20	23	21	24	65	38	34	16	20	16
Total	22	26	24	40	72	36	35	22	22	18

Legend	high share of households reducing consumption	10–40% share of households reducing consumption	low (<10%) share of households reducing consumption

Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Food security

The surveyed agricultural households responded to the standard eight questions that comprise the FIES survey module, referring to conditions and experiences typically associated with the inability to access food. Their answers allowed to assess the distribution of food insecurity in the sampled households, at different levels of severity.[3]

During the 30 days preceding the survey, most households reported having been worried about (i) not having enough food to eat, (ii) not having been able to eat healthy and nutritious food, (iii) eating only a few kinds of foods, and (iv) eating less than they thought they should eat in general (Table 2). Other conditions and experiences referring to more severe situations of food insecurity were reported less frequently, with very few households reporting having gone for an entire day without eating due to a lack of money or other resources.

[3] For additional information, see www.fao.org/in-action/voices-of-the-hungry/analyse-data

Table 2. Proportion of surveyed agricultural households reporting various conditions and experiences revealing a state of food insecurity

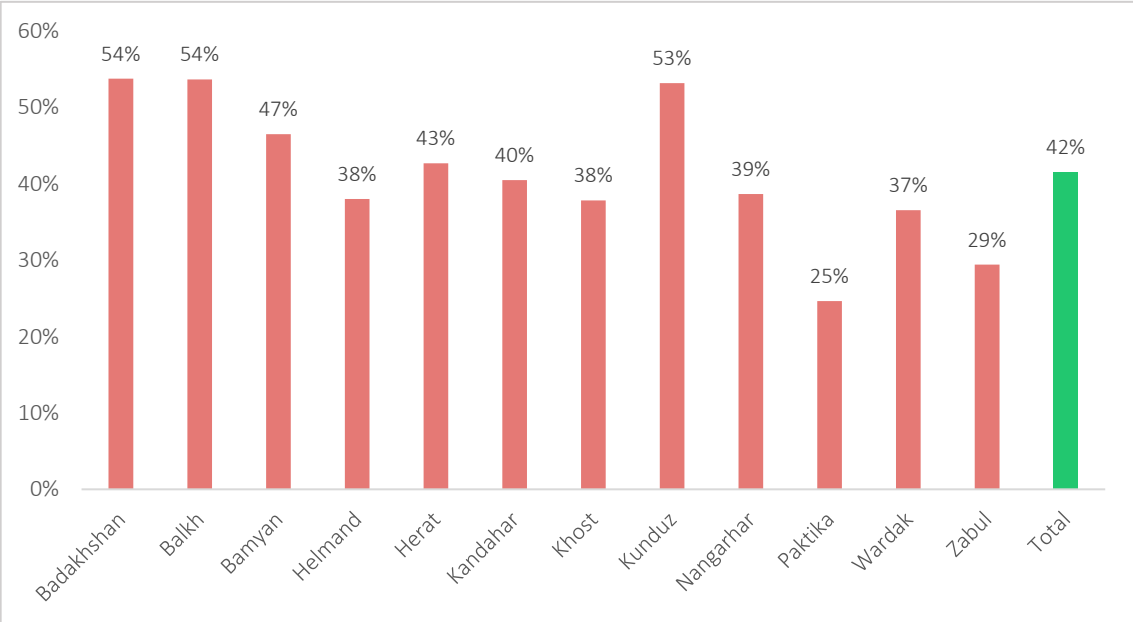
Province	Typical food insecurity experiences and conditions experienced because of a lack of money or other resources (percentage of households)							
	Were worried about food	Unable to eat healthy or nutritious food	Ate only a few kinds of food	Skipped a meal	Ate less than they thought they should	Ran out of food	Were hungry but could not eat	Went without eating for whole day
Badakhshan	70	62	79	32	55	35	31	18
Balkh	67	57	79	28	57	44	17	10
Bamyan	75	66	81	19	46	27	9	4
Helmand	53	44	68	16	47	27	19	2
Herat	57	61	71	26	44	24	13	11
Kandahar	50	53	75	18	44	30	19	3
Khost	57	34	63	10	31	44	13	1
Kunduz	73	62	80	33	52	39	23	9
Nangarhar	57	38	66	9	44	30	10	1
Paktika	40	51	59	8	31	10	8	3
Wardak	59	69	82	17	34	19	3	1
Zabul	47	37	72	5	29	22	5	2
Total	59	52	72	19	44	30	15	6

Legend	high	10–40%	low (<10%)

Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

FIES data can be analysed to estimate the prevalence of recent food insecurity in the sampled population. Figure 31 shows the prevalence of food insecurity (moderate or severe levels combined) among the surveyed agricultural households, with results disaggregated by province.[4] In the period between July and October, 41 percent of surveyed households were found to have experienced moderate or severe levels of food insecurity. The highest levels were found in the provinces of Badakhshan, Balkh and Kunduz, whereas Paktika province showed the lowest proportion of households experiencing food insecurity.

Figure 31. Prevalence of recent moderate or severe food insecurity among surveyed agricultural households (according to the FIES module)
(by province)



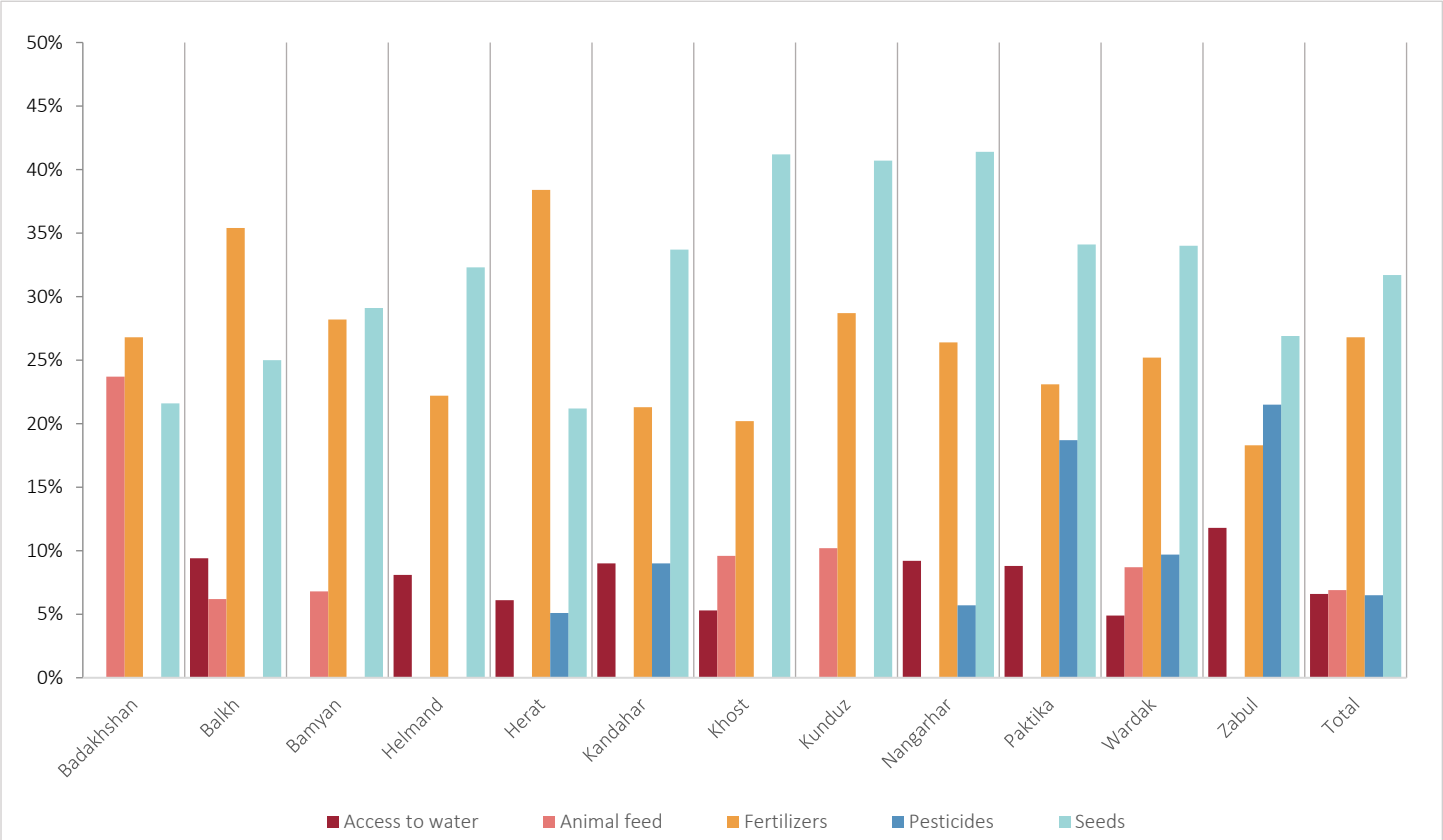
Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

[4] As the sample cannot be considered a random sampling of agricultural households in each province, weights were computed so that the proportion of agricultural households in each province in the sample matched the corresponding proportion in the population of each province, as derived from the latest estimates available from the 2020 Seasonal Food Security Assessment.

Most affected population groups and needs

Almost all surveyed households reported a need for some form of assistance for their crop and livestock production. Most of these households reported being in need of seeds and fertilizers over the coming three months in order to support their agricultural production (Figure 32). Overall, the declared assistance needs were uniform across all provinces.

Figure 32. Main types of assistance needed to support agricultural production, as reported by surveyed agricultural households
(proportion of households, by province)



Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Conclusion

Afghanistan's food systems face significant structural challenges, including underdeveloped value chains, weak market linkages, inadequate infrastructure and insufficient technical knowledge among food system actors. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated some of these existing problems, which has in turn negatively impacted the ability of agricultural households to produce as well as to market their agricultural production.

Against this backdrop, 60 percent of surveyed crop producers and 36 percent of surveyed livestock producers faced difficulties with their agriculture activities, while almost one-third of them reported having had to sell their produce at lower prices compared to the same period last year.

In addition, the livestock headcount of 43 percent of surveyed livestock producers had decreased compared to same period last year, as they were forced into selling them as a negative coping mechanism in order to buy food. Disruptions in these agricultural livelihoods have significantly affected income levels among surveyed households, with 77 percent of agricultural households having reported a decrease in income. This loss of income meant that households were unable to maintain adequate food consumption levels, which is exemplified by the fact that 41 percent of surveyed households were found to be experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity in the 30 days prior to the survey (in accordance with the FIES module).

Recommendations

- The biggest hindrance for the majority of surveyed crop producers was the outbreak of pests and crop diseases, as was reported by 49 percent of them. As such, ensuring crop health is paramount in order to guarantee that there are fruitful yields and of good quality moving forward. Long-term strategies to minimize pest and disease outbreaks, such as using disease and pest-resistant crops, practicing crop rotation and using adequate cultivation techniques shall allow for proper pest and disease management.
- One-third of surveyed crop producers were unable to access seeds in the three months before the survey, primarily due to high seed prices and low seed quality. A similar proportion of surveyed crop producers reported needing seeds to support their production in the coming three months. Therefore, ensuring that crop producers are able to access high-quality and certified seeds at affordable prices should be a priority. The use of high-quality seeds means that those seeds in use can withstand different climatic, environmental and/or pest-specific types of stress, thus allowing for fewer pesticides in use to ward off pests and diseases. Similarly, during the survey, surveyed crop producers also highlighted their need for fertilizers, as was reported by 27 percent of them.
- For surveyed livestock producers, the COVID-19-specific lockdown measures resulted in a lack of access to veterinary services, as was reported by 15 percent of them. In provinces like Badakhshan, access to animal feed is also crucial for these

livestock producers to continue with their activities, as reported by 24 percent of them.

- Across the provinces surveyed, the proportion of agricultural households experiencing moderate to severe food insecurity was found to be particularly high, at 41 percent of households, with a majority of them having to eat a reduced quantity of food as a result. As an immediate intervention, these households require food and cash assistance in order to prevent their food security from further deteriorating.

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Annex 1

Data analysis outputs

Table 3. Area planted of surveyed crop-producing households compared to previous year

(by province)

Province	Larger area		Lesser area			Same area			
	Households (percentage)	Weighted count	Standard Error of Row N (percentage)	Households (percentage)	Weighted count	Standard Error of Row N (percentage)	Households (percentage)	Weighted count	Standard Error of Row N (percentage)
Badakhshan	14.5	12	3.9	12.9	10	3.7	72.6	59	5.0
Balkh	9.4	7	3.5	11.8	8	3.9	78.8	55	4.9
Bamyan	8.6	4	4.4	18.3	8	6.0	73.1	30	6.9
Helmand	-	8	1.5	8.8	16	2.1	86.8	161	2.5
Herat	5.6	8	1.9	5.6	8	1.9	88.8	124	2.7
Kandahar	7.2	6	2.8	8.4	7	3.0	84.3	72	3.9
Khost	10.6	9	3.4	5.3	4	2.5	83.0	69	4.1
Kunduz	8.1	4	3.7	12.1	7	4.4	79.8	43	5.5
Nangarhar	-	8	1.8	13.6	21	2.8	81.5	124	3.2
Paktika	6.6	2	4.3	-	1	2.5	91.2	31	4.9
Wardak	-	4	2.3	13.6	11	3.8	81.8	66	4.3
Zabul	-	1	4.1	-	1	3.6	92.4	24	5.3
Total	**7.0**	**73**	**0.8**	**9.9**	**102**	**0.9**	**83.1**	**858**	**1.2**

Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Table 4. Proportion of surveyed crop-producing households reporting unusal difficulties with their crop production in the three months prior to the survey (by province)

Province	Count (Row N) (percentage)	Weighted count	Standard error (percentage)
Badakhshan	59.7	52	5.20
Balkh	52.3	38	5.90
Bamyan	58.5	25	7.60
Helmand	61.1	112	3.60
Herat	59.8	87	4.10
Kandahar	68.7	59	5.00
Khost	58.9	49	5.40
Kunduz	58.6	32	6.70
Nangarhar	52.4	81	4.00
Paktika	54.3	19	8.40
Wardak	67.0	54	5.20
Zabul	70.7	18	9.10
Total	**59.6**	**626**	**1.50**

Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Table 5. Main difficulties in accessing seeds in the three months prior to the survey, as reported by surveyed crop-producing households (by province)

Province	Proportion of crop producers not facing difficulties in accessing seeds			Proportion of crop producers facing difficulties in accessing seeds			Proportion of crop producers not requiring seeds (out of season)		
	Row N (percentage)	Count	Standard Error of Row N (percentage)	Row N (percentage)	Count	Standard Error of Row N (percentage)	Row N (percentage)	Count	Standard Error of Row N (percentage)
Badakhshan	69.2	59	5.0	23.1	20	4.6	7.7	7	2.9
Balkh	58.1	41	5.9	30.2	21	5.5	11.6	8	3.8
Bamyan	45.2	19	7.8	38.7	16	7.6	16.1	7	5.7
Helmand	57.5	102	3.7	32.2	57	3.5	10.3	18	2.3
Herat	57.6	77	4.3	25.9	35	3.8	16.5	22	3.2
Kandahar	50.7	39	5.7	33.3	26	5.4	16.0	12	4.2
Khost	50.0	41	5.5	44.7	37	5.5	5.3	4	2.5
Kunduz	46.9	25	6.8	39.8	21	6.7	13.3	7	4.6
Nangarhar	53.1	81	4.0	40.7	62	4.0	6.2	9	2.0
Paktika	64.4	22	8.2	35.6	12	8.2	0.0	0	-
Wardak	72.3	55	5.1	26.5	20	5.1	1.2	1	1.3
Zabul	56.1	13	10.3	26.8	6	9.2	17.1	4	7.8
Total	**57.0**	**574**	**1.60**	**33.1**	**333**	**1.5**	**9.9**	**100**	**0.9**

Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Table 6. Proportion of surveyed crop-producing households reporting changes in their production levels compared to last year (a normal year)

(by province)

Province	Higher production levels			Lower production levels (Up to 25% lower)			Much lower production levels (25–50% lower)			Same production levels		
	Row N (percentage)	Count	Standard Error of Row N (percentage)	Row N (percentage)	Count	Standard Error of Row N (percentage)	Row N (percentage)	Count	Standard Error of Row N (percentage)	Row N (percentage)	Count	Standard Error of Row N (percentage)
Badakhshan	35.8	25	5.8	30.2	21	5.5	17.0	12	4.5	-	4	2.8
Balkh	36.8	23	6.1	27.6	17	5.6	18.4	12	4.9	10.5	7	3.9
Bamyan	26.3	9	7.3	36.3	13	8.0	18.8	7	6.5	13.8	5	5.7
Helmand	32.2	39	4.3	33.9	41	4.3	-	8	-	25.4	31	4.0
Herat	42.2	55	4.3	25.3	33	3.8	12.0	16	2.8	9.6	13	2.6
Kandahar	20.8	15	4.7	33.3	25	5.5	27.8	21	5.2	12.5	9	3.8
Khost	31.6	22	5.6	36.7	26	5.8	15.2	11	4.3	12.7	9	4.0
Kunduz	33.3	14	7.4	28.0	11	7.0	20.0	8	6.2	12.0	5	5.1
Nangarhar	41.5	41	5.0	30.2	30	4.6	17.0	17	3.8	9.4	9	2.9
Paktika	43.8	12	9.5	20.5	6	7.8	24.7	7	8.3	-	2	4.4
Wardak	31.3	24	5.3	31.3	24	5.3	15.7	12	4.2	9.6	7	3.4
Zabul	19.5	4	8.3	39.0	9	10.2	34.1	8	9.9	-	1	3.2
Total	**34.2**	**284**	**1.6**	**30.8**	**255**	**1.6**	**16.5**	**137**	**1.3**	**12.1**	**100**	**1.1**

Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Table 7. Difficulties in raising livestock compared to the same time last year

	Row N (percentage)	Count	Standard Error of Row N (percentage)
Difficulty in accessing feed	5.7	13	1.5
Difficulty in accessing veterinary inputs	5.1	12	1.4
Difficulty in accessing veterinary services	14.8	35	2.3
Animal disease	4.9	11	1.4
No unusual difficulties experienced	64.4	152	3.1
Yes - minor difficulties experienced	9.9	23	2.0
Yes - significant difficulties experienced	25.6	60	2.8

Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Table 8. Reported changes in livestock herd numbers (cattle) compared to the same time last year

	Row N (percentage)	Count	Unweighted count	Standard Error of Row N (percentage)
A bit fewer cattle	36.9	64	60	3.6
A bit more cattle	23.6	41	39	3.2
Much fewer cattle	5.7	10	9	1.8
The same number of cattle	33.8	59	59	3.6

Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Table 9. Difficulties in selling production in the three months prior to the survey, as reported by surveyed agricultural households

(by province)

Province	No unusual difficulties faced		Yes – minor difficulties faced		Yes – significant difficulties faced		
	Row N (percentage)	Count	Row N (percentage)	Count	Row N (percentage)	Count	Standard Error of Row N (percentage)
Badakhshan	85.6	108	7.2	9	-	5	-
Balkh	72.4	58	9.2	7	15.3	12	4.0
Bamyan	55.4	25	-	1	23.8	11	6.3
Helmand	79.0	161	11.0	22	7.0	14	1.8
Herat	53.9	87	9.8	16	33.3	54	3.7
Kandahar	47.8	45	12.0	11	30.4	29	4.7
Khost	71.1	71	-	4	12.3	12	3.3
Kunduz	66.1	39	6.4	4	22.9	14	5.4
Nangarhar	70.6	113	12.9	21	11.8	19	2.5
Paktika	75.5	27	14.9	5	9.6	3	5.0
Wardak	75.5	71	6.9	6	8.8	8	2.9
Zabul	53.8	14	9.7	2	15.1	4	7.0
Total	**69.1**	**820**	**9.2**	**109**	**15.6**	**185**	**1.1**

Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Table 10. Types of shocks in the three months prior to the survey, as reported by surveyed agricultural households

(percentage of households, by province)

Province	No shock	Health shocks (sickness/death)	Income\employment shocks	Market shocks (high price/production cost)	Conflict/insecurity
Badakhshan	46.4	34.0	10.3	7.2	14.4
Balkh	45.9	39.8	8.2	-	11.2
Bamyan	38.7	47.2	7.5	-	0.0%
Helmand	28.4	57.8	22.5	13.7	12.7
Herat	41.2	42.2	9.8	8.8	5.9
Kandahar	38.7	44.1	24.7	8.6	11.8
Khost	40.0	50.4	18.3	12.2	6.1
Kunduz	34.9	43.1	10.1	10.1	23.9
Nangarhar	37.1	56.2	23.6	12.4	11.2
Paktika	52.6	12.6	26.3	5.3	8.4
Wardak	42.3	30.8	11.5	10.6	26.0
Zabul	38.5	24.0	9.4	-	-
Total	**39.1**	**45.0**	**16.6**	**9.7**	**12.1**

Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Table 11. Main needs identified by surveyed agricultural households

(percentage of households, by province)

Province	Access to water			Animal feed			Cash assistance			Fertilizers			Pesticides			Seeds		
	Row N (percentage)	Count	Standard Error of Row N (percentage)	Row N (percentage)	Count	Standard Error of Row N (percentage)	Row N (percentage)	Count	Standard Error of Row N (percentage)	Row N (percentage)	Count	Standard Error of Row N (percentage)	Row N (percentage)	Count	Standard Error of Row N (percentage)	Row N (percentage)	Count	Standard Error of Row N (percentage)
Badakhshan	-	4	-	23.7	30	3.8	8.2	10	2.4	26.8	34	3.9	-	5	-	21.6	27	3.7
Balkh	9.4	7	3.3	6.2	5	2.7	6.2	5	2.7	35.4	28	5.4	-	1	-	25.0	20	4.9
Bamyan	2.9	1	2.5	6.8	3	3.7	-	3	-	28.2	13	6.6	-	1	-	29.1	13	6.7
Helmand	8.1	16	1.9	2.0	4	1.0	-	6	-	22.2	45	2.9	10.1	20	2.1	32.3	65	3.3
Herat	6.1	9	1.9	4.0	6	1.6	-	6	-	38.4	60	3.9	5.1	8	1.8	21.2	33	3.3
Kandahar	9.0	8	3.0	4.5	4	2.2	5.6	5	2.4	21.3	20	4.3	9.0	8	3.0	33.7	31	4.9
Khost	5.3	5	2.2	9.6	10	3.0	6.1	6	2.4	20.2	20	4.0	-	2	-	41.2	41	4.9
Kunduz	-	0	-	10.2	6	3.9	5.6	3	3.0	28.7	17	5.9	-	1	-	40.7	24	6.4
Nangarhar	9.2	15	2.3	2.3	4	1.2	8.0	13	2.1	26.4	43	3.5	5.7	9	1.8	41.4	68	3.9
Paktika	8.8	3	4.9	2.2	1	2.5	-	1	-	23.1	8	7.2	18.7	6	6.7	34.1	12	8.1
Wardak	4.9	5	2.2	8.7	8	2.9	4.9	5	2.2	25.2	24	4.5	9.7	9	3.0	34.0	32	4.9
Zabul	11.8	3	6.3	2.2	1	2.8	-	1	-	18.3	5	7.6	21.5	6	8.1	26.9	7	8.7
Total	**6.6**	**78**	**0.7**	**6.9**	**82**	**0.7**	**5.5**	**65**	**0.7**	**26.8**	**316**	**1.3**	**6.5**	**76**	**0.7**	**31.7**	**374**	**1.4**

Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Table 12. Proportion of surveyed agricultural households in a state of moderate or severe food insecurity (according to FIES module)

(percentage of households, by province)

Province	Percentage	Number of households
Badakhshan	53.8	97
Balkh	53.7	98
Bamyan	46.5	106
Helmand	38.0	102
Herat	42.7	102
Kandahar	40.5	93
Khost	37.8	115
Kunduz	53.2	109
Nangarhar	38.7	89
Paktika	24.6	95
Wardak	36.6	104
Zabul	29.4	96
Total	**42.0**	**1 206**

Source: FAO, 2020; FAO assessment results

Contact

FAO Representation in Afghanistan
FAO-AF@fao.org | www.fao.org/afghanistan/en/
Kabul, Afghanistan

FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
FAO-RAP@fao.org | www.fao.org/asiapacific/en/
Bangkok, Thailand

Office of Emergencies and Resilience
OER-Director@fao.org | www.fao.org/emergencies
Rome, Italy

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