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Layout design by Angham Abdelmageed (FAO RNE).

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADAFSA	Abu Dhabi Agriculture and Food Safety Authority
Agritech	Agricultural Technology
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
BoA	Bank of Africa
CARI	Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security
COP	Conference of Parties
CoP	Community of Practice (in the Syrian Arab Republic)
DAP	Diammonium phosphate
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
FAO RNE	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa
FAOSTAT	Food and Agricultural Organization's Statistics Database
FBS	Farm Business School
FPMA	FAO Food Price Monitoring and Analysis Tool
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
GCC	Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf
ICFA	Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture
IDGC	Industry Disruptors-Game Changers
IGC	International Grains Council
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund

IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
JRC MARS	Joint Research Centre on Monitoring Agricultural Resources Bulletin
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NENA	Near East and North Africa
OIA	Oman Investment Authority
SALIC	Saudi Agricultural and Livestock Investment Company
SMEs	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
SSP	Smallholder Support Programme
TIA	Tunisian Investment Authority
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme

Summary¹

Although international commodities and food prices have declined over the past 12 months, domestic food price inflation remains high in many countries of the Arab region, partly due to domestic currency depreciation and continued high energy, transportation, and insurance costs. The average food consumer price index in the NENA region was 18.2 percent at the beginning of July 2023 according to the FAO Data Lab price nowcasting tool, and was elevated in the following countries: Algeria (18.9 percent), Egypt (67 percent), Lebanon (328 percent), Mauritania (14 percent), Morocco (15.3 percent), the Sudan (28.2 percent), and Tunisia (16.2 percent). Conversely, Jordan and the oil-exporting Gulf countries have low food inflation rates (below 5 percent).

Raising cash for foreign debt repayments has become an increasingly difficult task for many countries in the region (except for oil-exporting Gulf countries). This decreases the financial space to maintain the price support of basic staple food in real terms and safeguard social safety net measures, which, in turn, threatens to aggravate food insecurity.

According to the latest FAO figures, hunger in Arab countries reached its highest value since 2000 in 2022 when 12.9 percent of the population (59.8 million people) was considered undernourished, a number well above the world average of 9.2 percent. This represents a 75.9 percent increase since 2000 before the region was hit by a chain of extreme natural events and political shocks. In 2022, moderate or severe food insecurity affected 170.1 million people (36.6 percent of the population), a slight decrease from 2021, when 173.3 million people (37.9 percent of the population) were food insecure and deprived of regular access to sufficient and nutritious food. In 2022, 61.0 million people suffered from severe food insecurity, an increase of 3.8 million people from the previous year.

Recent FAO and WFP early warnings on the acute food insecurity outlook show that acute food insecurity in Somalia and Yemen remains critical. The outbreak of conflict has placed the Sudan at the highest concern levels, and the Syrian Arab Republic remains at very high concern as a hunger hotspot. Conflict is the key driver of acute food insecurity in these countries. The economic and social crises in Lebanon have also placed it on the list of hunger hotspots. Chronic food shortages in Tunisia, on the other hand, are caused by the critical water deficit.

The already dire food insecurity situation in the Sudan has been worsened by the current crisis; hunger levels are expected to rise substantially across the country. By June 2023, 2.5 million people were displaced as a result of the war between rival military factions, causing a humanitarian crisis. One million vulnerable farmers and their families (totalling five million people) are set to receive assistance from FAO in the form of cereal seeds (sorghum, millet) and okra seeds in June–July 2023. In addition, to strengthen the food security and nutrition of 6.5 million people, FAO aims to target 1.3 million pastoralists with livestock services and inputs.

FAO hopes to provide USD 45 million to deliver both immediate and longer-term support to

¹ This Bulletin is intended to cover the countries of the Near East and North Africa (NENA) and Arab region: Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. The terms NENA region and Arab region are used interchangeably.

severely affected rural communities in the Syrian Arab Republic in response to the February earthquake. Earthquake-affected communities would be supported through an interlinked set of earthquake emergency response and resilience-building interventions with the overall objective of saving and sustaining rural farming livelihoods, and increasing and diversifying their agricultural production, along with the rehabilitation of affected irrigation and water-related infrastructure, and other important community-level agricultural infrastructure.

Crop conditions vary in the region. Large areas of Morocco, most of Algeria and Tunisia, and northwestern Iraq expect below-average yields, while localized areas of northern Algeria, northeastern Morocco, and north-central Tunisia expect near total crop failure due to persistent seasonal drought and high temperatures. On the other hand, Egyptian yields are expected to be near average as a result of adequate irrigation water supply, and conditions remain favorable in most parts of Iraq. An expected boost in the 2023 domestic harvest in the Syrian Arab Republic means that the country will only need to import half the amount of wheat compared to 2022.

USDA foresees an increase in food import requirements in the region for the 2022/23 season. Wheat production is predicted to be 16.2 percent lower compared to the previous season in North Africa, while it is foreseen to be 4.4 percent higher in selected Near East countries. Thus, wheat imports are expected to increase in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22 by 9.7 percent in North Africa and by 4.5 percent in selected Near East countries.

Concerning recent food policies in the region, in an effort to offset rising food prices, Egypt increased food subsidies, including those for rice and vegetable oils. Tunisia, on the other hand, raised the prices of some foods, including milk, eggs and poultry, to ensure the profit margin for agricultural producers that had been eroded by a jump in animal feed barley prices.

Among the trade-facilitation measures, Morocco lifted the value-added tax on agricultural inputs to help lower food prices. The United Arab Emirates has continued its trade opening strategy by signing a Free Trade Agreement with Turkey, and foresees further bilateral economic agreements with Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Israel, Kenya, South Korea, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

To attract foreign investments, including in agriculture, Jordan improved its investment climate, while Tunisia provides fully automated digital services for foreign investors. Oman increased its investment in the Blue Economy in order to become a global seafood producer. Wealthier Gulf countries have continued to expand their investments in regional and global food markets to increase domestic food security. The Saudi Agricultural and Livestock Investment Company (SALIC) acquired a 10–15 percent stake in Brazil's biggest poultry producer (BRF S.A.). The Oman Investment Authority is considering investing USD 5 billion in Egypt, including in the food sector, over the next three years.

Countries adopted the following trade-restricting measures: Egypt banned sugar exports to secure sufficient sugar for domestic consumption and extended its ban on exporting wheat, flour, corn, lentils, pasta, fava beans, and all kinds of vegetable oil. With its new trade remedies law, Saudi Arabia aims to promote the establishment and development of domestic industries and to protect them from unfair foreign trade practices.

Many recent food policy measures in the region have aimed to increase the sustainability and resilience of agrifood systems, such as increasing water security (Algeria: desalination,

Oman: new law on sustainable water management), investing in sustainable food projects, modern agricultural technologies, and green seaports (Bahrain). Government measures in the United Arab Emirates promoted sustainable farming income by supporting agritourism and other activities that can be carried out on farms. Saudi Arabia ratified the ILO Protocol on Forced Labour Convention, which will enhance the sustainability of global food supply chains. Recent private innovations also enhance the sustainability of regional food systems. IFFCO, a multinational group based in the United Arab Emirates set up the first fully plant-based meat factory in the Near East in Dubai and, later, also launched its fava beans-based meat in Saudi Arabia.

The joint initiative led by the United Arab Emirates and the United States of America, Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate (AIM for Climate) which focuses on making farming more sustainable, has received over USD 13 billion in funding. The Emirates Development Bank launched a USD 27 million Agritech Loans Programme to help farms adopt advanced technology and cutting-edge solutions, such as implementing precision agriculture techniques, state-of-the-art irrigation systems, and advanced crop monitoring tools. Donor countries announced new cooperations to enhance green transition in the region (European Union in Iraq and Tunisia, EBRD in Morocco).

Donors, multilateral and regional institutions continued to approve new financial assistance to provide humanitarian aid (World Bank and European Union in Lebanon), support food security (WFP in Egypt), and provide additional fiscal space to combat external shocks, including droughts (IMF in Morocco). On the other hand, due to a lack of funding, WFP has reduced its food aid in Palestine, and resource constraints are limiting its operations in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Section II of the Bulletin focuses on entrepreneurship. It presents FAO's work and projects in the Arab region that promote agrifood entrepreneurs (agripreneurs) who are key drivers in developing sustainable food systems and value chains, and contribute to rural poverty reduction. In addition to bringing economic benefits, such as job and income generation, entrepreneurs also have the potential to bring positive social change, such as gender and youth empowerment. Innovative entrepreneurs can be important drivers in agribusiness and agro-industry development and can contribute to agrifood systems transformation in the region.

As part of Regional Priority 1 (Rural transformation and inclusive value chains), FAO promotes agribusiness and agro-industry development through a number of pathways including entrepreneurship. FAO projects in the Arab region support agripreneurs by promoting access to critical resources, such as credit and finance, business services, and technology. Other initiatives like the Agrination Startup Cup and Farm Business Schools, aim to advance innovative youth-led social entrepreneurship, improve entrepreneurial business and digital skills, and set up digital innovation hubs.

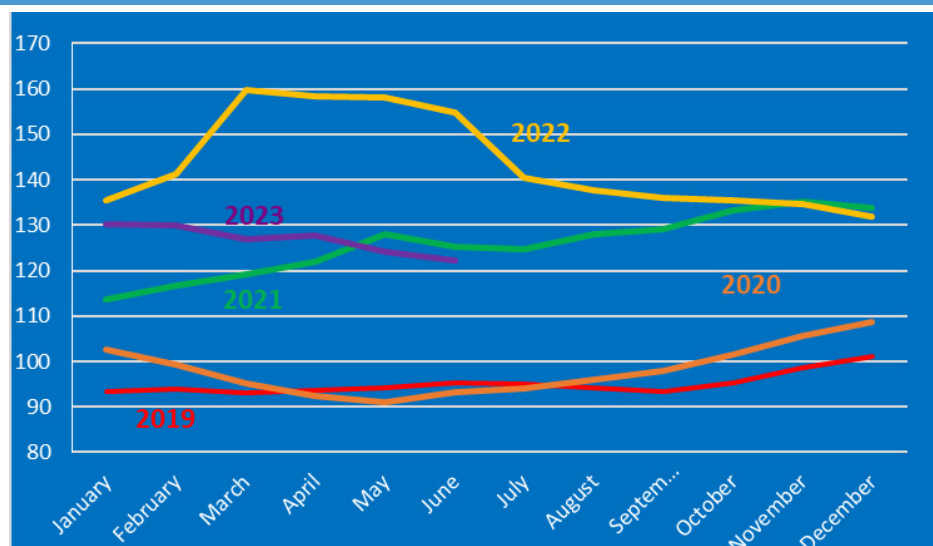


Section I: Food markets and food security situation²

Global food markets

The **FAO Food Price Index** averaged 122.3 points in June 2023, **continuing the downward trend** and marking a 23.4 percent decline from its peak in March 2022. However, **global food prices remain high compared to 2019–2020 Food Price Index levels** (Figure 1).

Figure 1. FAO Food Price Index

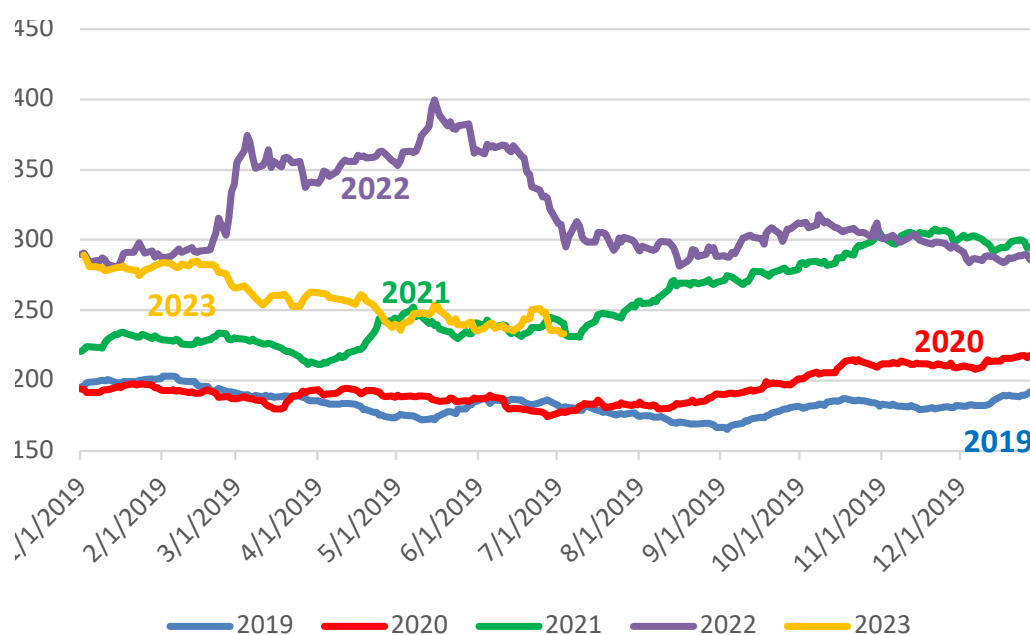


Source: FAO. 2023. FAOSTAT: World Food Situation. In: FAO. Rome. Cited February 2023. <https://www.fao.org/worldfoodsituation/foodpricesindex/en/>

² The maps presented in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of FAO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The Wheat subindex of the [Grains and Oilseeds Index](#) by the International Grains Council (IGC), which tracks the price movement across seven essential commodities, was 26.7 percent lower at the end of June 2023 than a year before (Figure 2). Wheat prices are currently at their level in 2021, though they are still **well above 2019–2020 price levels**.

Figure 2. Wheat subindex of the Grains and Oilseeds Index by the IGC



Source: International Grains Council (IGC). 2023. Grains and Oilseeds Index. In: IGC. London. Cited July 2023. <https://www.igc.int/en/markets/marketinfo-goi.aspx>

The World Bank natural gas index peaked in August 2022; though it returned to its May 2021 levels by March 2023 (Figure A1, Annex). The **prices of fertilizers** reached a peak in April 2022 but have fallen back since then.³ In June 2023, diammonium phosphate (DAP) prices were 42.0 percent lower than a year before, urea prices went down by 58.3 percent and potassium chloride prices by 70.2 percent (Figure A2). However, the prices of all fertilizers are still **above their level in 2020**. Despite the price decreases, the [depreciation of the local currency in many countries has caused fertilizer imports to be more expensive](#), placing a financial burden on fertilizer users, such as smallholder farmers, who are more exposed to input costs. In addition, many uncertainties remain in the short term, such as the fate of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, potash exports from Belarus, and energy price developments in the second half of 2023.

The [latest FAO forecast](#) points to increases in production and **higher closing stocks of several basic foodstuffs**, though global food production systems remain vulnerable to extreme weather events, geopolitical tensions, policy changes, and developments in other (non-food) markets. Initial forecasts point to a likely 1 percent increase in global cereal production in 2023, to reach 2 813 million tonnes. Most of the increase depends on a foreseen rise in maize production, with increases also anticipated for rice and sorghum. Partially offsetting

³ Prices of fertilizers, particularly nitrogen fertilizers, are significantly affected by natural gas prices, as their production requires massive energy.

these increases, **wheat** (3 percent fall) and barley outputs are **predicted to fall below their 2022 levels**. Global oilseed production is projected to rebound in 2022/23, mainly driven by anticipated increases in soybean and rapeseed production levels.

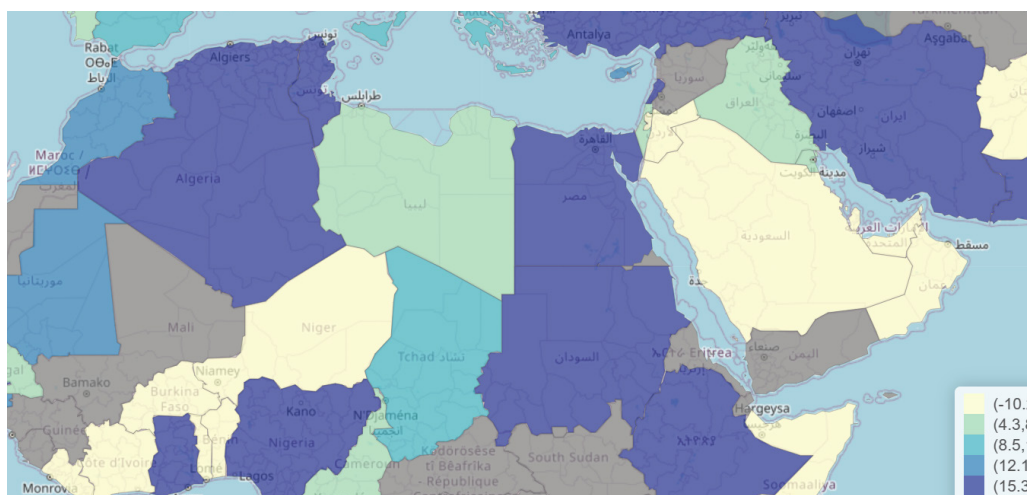
The [Black Sea Grain Initiative](#) has stabilized global commodity markets and brought down food costs since its inception in July 2022. On 17 May 2023, Russia agreed to continue its participation in the deal for another 60 days, but [Russia quitted the deal](#) on 17 July, which can hit the Arab region and the Horn of Africa particularly hard.

While agricultural prices have declined over the past 12 months, **domestic food price inflation remains high in low-, middle-, and high-income countries worldwide**. Food inflation remains elevated in part [because of the strong US dollar](#), which has kept commodity prices high in local currencies, and due to post-farmgate costs such as energy, transportation, and insurance costs, which account for a large share of the retail price and remain high due to core inflationary pressures. Those who are poor and vulnerable suffer the most from high food prices as they spend high shares of their incomes on food and have weak capacity to cope with price shocks.

Food price inflation persists in the Arab region

Food price inflation in the NENA region continues to be high except for the oil-exporting Gulf countries. [Egypt and Lebanon are in the top 10 countries on the World Bank's nominal food inflation list](#) and have experienced 60 percent and 304 percent nominal food inflation, respectively, between February 2023 and May 2023.

Figure 3. Expected year-over-year food price variations map (FAO Data Lab)

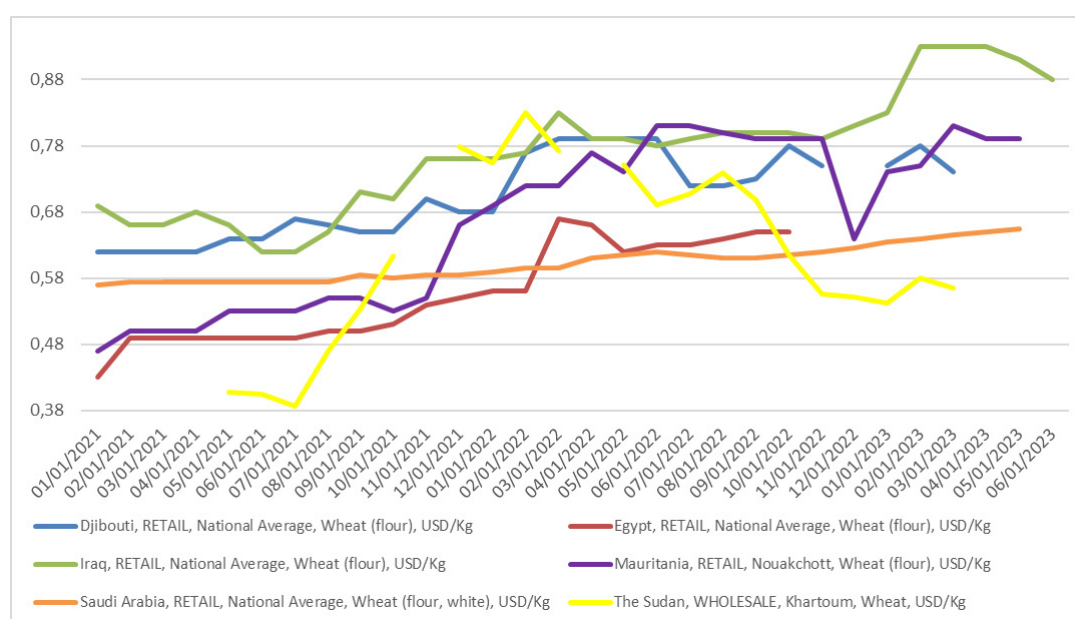


Source: FAO. 2023. Data Lab. In: FAO. Rome. Cited 5 July 2023. foodandagricultureorganization.shinyapps.io/dL_foodprices/

Note: The final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. The final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined.

According to the FAO Data Lab price nowcasting tool, the [average food consumer price index in the NENA region was 18.2 percent](#) at the beginning of July 2023. On 5 July 2023, based on FAO Data Lab (Figure 3), the food consumer price index was the following: Algeria (18.9 percent), Bahrain (3.3 percent), Egypt (67 percent), Iraq (8.2 percent), Kuwait (6.2 percent), Lebanon (328 percent), Libya (5.6 percent), Mauritania (14 percent), Morocco (15.3 percent), Oman (2.3 percent), Palestine (3.6 percent), Saudi Arabia (1.1 percent), Somalia (2.3 percent), the Sudan (28.2 percent), Tunisia (16.2 percent), the United Arab Emirates (4.3 percent). Food inflation is easing in Jordan (-1.1 percent), and Qatar (-0.9 percent).

Figure 4. Wheat (flour) retail prices in selected Arab countries



Source: FAO. 2023. FPMA Tool. In: FAO. Rome. Cited February 2023. <https://fpma.fao.org/giews/fpmat4/#/dashboard/tool/domestic>

Figure 4 shows some examples of wheat price developments in the region since January 2021. The graph shows an increasing trend in domestic wheat prices, particularly since the beginning of 2022, when the cost of wheat flour increased by 8.8 percent in Djibouti, by 16.1 percent in Egypt, by 14.5 percent in Mauritania, and by 11.0 percent in Saudi Arabia. Conversely, the wholesale price of wheat started to decrease in the Sudan from the beginning of 2022 until March 2023.

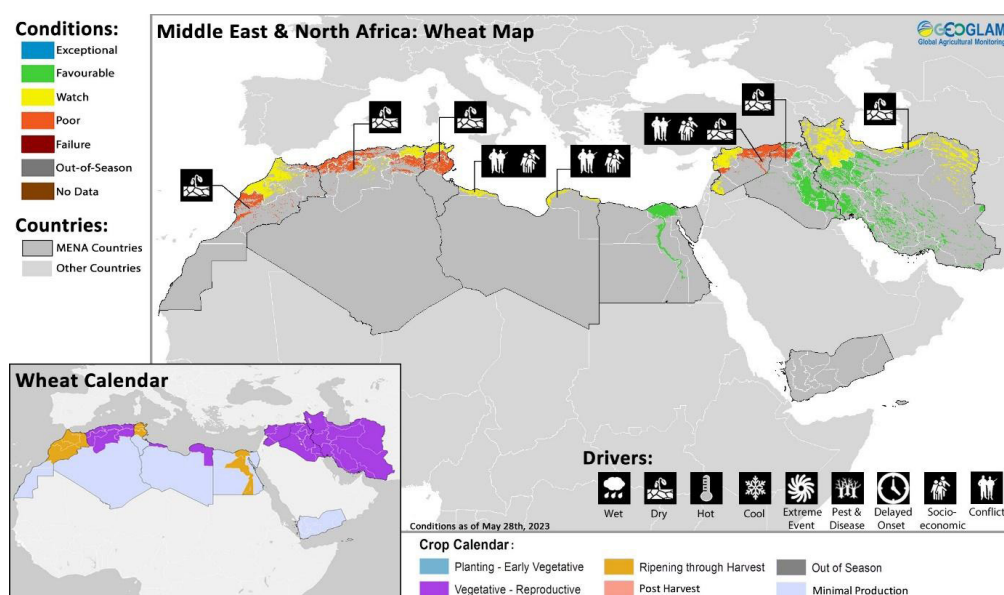
High prices of food, fertilizer, energy, and higher interest rates are increasing food import bills and the debt burdens of many countries in the region, affecting vulnerable populations the most. [Net food-importing countries did not benefit from falling international food prices](#) since the local currency's depreciation against the US dollar increased the domestic cost of food imports. As these vulnerable countries sunk deeper into the high price cycle, the ability of governments to cope with the compounding effect of the war in Ukraine was limited by their import reliance and high debt obligations after the COVID-19 pandemic. Many countries in the region (except for oil-exporting Gulf countries) face an increasingly tough task of raising

cash for foreign debt repayments. For example, in Egypt, external borrowing quadrupled over the past eight years. The [Paris Summit for a New Global Financing Pact](#) was held on 22 June 2023 with the objective of developing a new global financial system so the most vulnerable countries would be better equipped to combat both poverty and climate change. Among the prominent leaders, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah [el-Sisi attended the meeting and addressed the debt challenges](#) developing countries face, calling for reform of the global financial system to promote sustainable development financing.

Increased food imports demand due to crop failure

Crop conditions remain mixed with below-average yields expected in large areas of **Morocco**, most of **Algeria** and **Tunisia**, and northwestern **Iraq**. Near total crop failure is expected in localized areas of northeastern **Morocco**, northern **Algeria**, and north-central **Tunisia** due to persistent seasonal drought and high temperatures (Figure 6). Furthermore, concern remains throughout **Libya** and **the Syrian Arab Republic** where ongoing conflict and socio-economic challenges continue to impact crop outcomes. Conversely, yields are expected to be near-average in **Egypt** due to sufficient irrigation water supply, and conditions remain favorable in most parts of **Iraq**.

Figure 6. The situation of wheat crops and the wheat calendar



Source: Crop Monitor Early Warning. Issue No. 83. June 2023. Cited July 2023. https://cropmonitor.org/documents/EWCM/reports/EarlyWarning_CropMonitor_202306.pdf

Note: The final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. The final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined.

In **Algeria**, prolonged drought and high temperatures continue to adversely affect the majority of the cereal producing regions, except in the northeast, and have impacted crops during the critical flowering and grain-filling development stages. Rainfall has been limited since the beginning of March, with most regions experiencing record low rainfall accumulations. Temperatures have been consistently above the long-term average, particularly in western areas during late-April. Some regions, such as Khenchela, Mascara, Oum El Bouaghi, Saida, and Tebessa, face the significant possibility of complete crop failure. According to the May 2022 JRC MARS Bulletin, both yield and production levels are forecast to be well below the five-year average at 24 and 45 percent lower respectively.

In **Egypt**, conditions remain favourable for irrigated crops in the Nile valley and Delta regions, with sufficient irrigation water supply for adequate crop growth. Yield and production forecasts are expected to be close to the five-year average.

In **Iraq**, prospects are above-average across most of the country due to the good amount of rainfall received since the start of the season in November 2022. However, in the southern half of Ninewa, the main cereal producing governorate, dry conditions from December to February negatively affected rainfed winter cereals.

In **Libya**, the country experienced moderate fluctuations in daily temperatures while rainfall remained generally below the long-term average, except in Darnah and Nuqat al Khams where it was 10 percent above the long-term average. Biomass accumulation is above-average in Al Aziziyah, Darnah, and Jabal al Akhdar agricultural areas and near-average in other regions. Both yield and production are expected to be relatively near-normal.

In **Morocco**, wheat prospects remain poor due to a combination of seasonal drought and above-average temperatures that have adversely affected the vegetative to reproductive stages, accelerating crop senescence. The Oriental region located in the northeast is the most affected, with crop failure likely across much of the region. Although yield and total production prospects are poor, being 17 percent and 25 percent below the five-year average respectively, they are not as severe as the results observed in the previous season, according to the [May 2022 EU JRC MARS Bulletin](#).

In **the Syrian Arab Republic**, near-average rainfall since March has resulted in above-average crop biomass across the country, including in the main cereal producing governorate of Hassakeh. While low rainfall from December to early March resulted in below-average crop biomass in Hassakeh, improved rains since mid-March have led to partial crop recovery. As a result, production prospects for Hassakeh remain below-average but above drought-stricken levels of 2022. According to the Minister of Agriculture, the Syrian Arab Republic [will need to import half as much wheat in 2023 as in the previous year](#) due to an expected boost in the domestic harvest.

In **Tunisia**, wheat crops have been severely affected by persistent drought conditions, with rainfall occurring only in sporadic and low-intensity events, mostly in early March and the beginning of April. Cumulative precipitation was the lowest on record in most central and northern regions where the majority of cereal production occurs, resulting in rainfall deficits ranging from 65 to 80 percent below the long-term average. Regions such as El Kef, Siliana, and Zaghuan face a high probability of crop failure, while all other regions, except Bizerte, have observed below-average biomass accumulation. Yield is forecast to be 19 percent below

the five-year average, and production is forecast to be 28 percent below-average according to the May 2022 JRC MARS Bulletin.

USDA foresees **16.2 percent lower wheat production in 2022/23** (17.1 million tonnes) compared to 2021/22 (20.4 million tonnes) in North Africa⁴ and 4.4 percent higher wheat production in selected Near East countries⁵ in 2022/23 (17.1 million tonnes) compared to 2021/22 (16.5 million tonnes). However, **wheat import requirements will increase in 2022/23** compared to 2021/22 both in North Africa (by 9.7 percent) and selected Near East countries (by 4.5 percent).

Food security situation in the region

Hunger in Arab countries reached its highest value since 2000 in 2022. The number of undernourished people was 59.8 million in 2022, or **12.9 percent of the population, well above the world average of 9.2 percent.** This represents a 75.9 percent increase since 2000 before the region was hit by a chain of shocks including popular uprisings, conflicts, commodity price surges, extreme weather events, and recently the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. In 2022, moderate or severe food insecurity affected 170.1 million people (36.6 percent of the population), a slight decrease from 2021, when 173.3 million people (37.9 percent of the population) were food insecure and deprived of regular access to sufficient and nutritious food. **In 2022, 61.0 million people suffered from severe food insecurity, an increase of 3.8 million people from the previous year.**

According to the [FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity June to November 2023 outlook](#), **Somalia**, and **Yemen** remain at the highest alert level. The **Sudan** has been elevated to the highest concern levels due to an outbreak of conflict. The **Syrian Arab Republic** remains among the hunger hotspots with very high concern. In all these countries, conflict is the key driver of acute food insecurity. Due to the economic and social crisis, Lebanon has been added to the list of hotspots.

Lebanon's economic crisis is likely to further deepen, driven by ongoing political uncertainty and continuing macroeconomic deterioration. Increasing prices of essential goods are exacerbating the deterioration of food security and livelihoods for both Lebanese and refugee communities. Between January and April 2023, **2.3 million people (42 percent of the population analysed)**, including 1.5 million Lebanese residents and 800 000 Syrian refugees, were projected to face Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 and above) conditions, including 354 000 in Emergency (IPC Phase 4), as a result of the ongoing economic deterioration and the multifaceted crisis the country is facing. This represents a **significant deterioration compared to the September–December 2022 period**, when the first IPC analysis in the country indicated that the population in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 and above) was estimated at about 2 million (37 percent of the population analysed). A recently published UNICEF report shows that **three out of every four children under the age of five live in food poverty.**

Chronic fuel shortages, rapid currency depreciation and the repercussions of devastating earthquakes have compounded the difficulties of **Syrians** in accessing essential items, and

⁴ Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia

⁵ Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, United Arab Emirates, and Oman

strained the capacity of relief organizations. Between August and October 2022, [12.1 million people were assessed to be acutely food insecure](#) (55 percent of the total population) based on WFP's CARI methodology. Acute food insecurity is likely to increase further due to deteriorating economic conditions and the effects of the earthquakes. [Around 5.9 million children and women require nutrition assistance in 2023](#), an increase of 18 percent from 2022.

In [Tunisia](#), the food supply in 2023 is affected by the critical water deficit. The current filling rate in dams is only 37.3 percent, compared to an average of 48.8 percent over the last three years. Although rain came in May and early June, it was too late to save the cereal crop, which is barely expected to produce enough seeds for the next planting season, although tree crops might still be saved. Food shortages (e.g. rice, flour, sugar, coffee, bread, cereal products) continue and are becoming chronic. The situation is troubling, and long lines have been reported in front of bakeries across the country. The Government banned production of the special bread that bakeries used to produce during Eid.

[Acute food insecurity in Yemen will remain at critical levels](#), amid elevated fuel and food prices, and an anticipated funding shortfall. The economic crisis is expected to continue due to persistent political instability, insufficient external revenues, and elevated global commodity prices. These factors compound the ongoing depletion of foreign-exchange reserves, which in turn drives currency volatility and elevated retail food prices. In the latest countrywide analysis, [nearly 17 million people \(over 53 percent of the population\) in Yemen were estimated to be in Crisis or worse](#) (IPC Phase 3 and above) levels of acute food insecurity, including 6.1 million people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4), between October and December 2022.

Acute food insecurity escalates in the Sudan

The current crisis in the Sudan has worsened an already dire food insecurity situation, with hunger expected to increase substantially across the country as it heads into the typical lean season period from June to September. The war between rival military factions has [displaced 2.5 million people](#) until the end of June 2023 and caused a humanitarian crisis.

In 2022, the number of people at Crisis or worse levels (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification [IPC] [Phase 3+](#)) during the lean season was estimated at 11.7 million. Given the likely ripple effects of displacement, trade disruptions, and surges in food and fuel prices, the number of highly food insecure people in the country during this year's lean season could be above last year's figure. Moreover, according to the [latest IPC analysis](#), in the post-harvest period between October 2022 to February 2023, nearly eight million people were estimated to be acutely food insecure – a figure already 30 percent higher compared to the same period in the previous year.

FAO's immediate plan is to [assist over one million vulnerable farmers and their families](#) (totalling five million people) in June–July 2023 with cereal seeds (sorghum, millet) and okra seeds for planting in June to July 2023 in the country. Additionally, from July until the end of the year, FAO aims to target 1.3 million pastoralists with livestock services and inputs to strengthen the food security and nutrition of 6.5 million people. The Organization's emergency seed distribution, totalling 9 600 tonnes to the most vulnerable farming households in June and July, will allow vulnerable farmers to plant and produce enough food (up to 3 million

tonnes of cereals) from November to December 2023 to cover the cereal requirements of between 13 and 19 million people.

FAO's earthquake response and recovery plan in the Syrian Arab Republic

The earthquakes that struck the Syrian Arab Republic on 6 February 2023 caused major damage and losses, affecting both urban and rural areas. Given the already dire situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, after 12 years of conflict and crisis, there is an urgent need to address the suffering and uncertainty of these communities.

Post-earthquake assessments conducted by FAO highlighted that the majority of people living in earthquake-affected villages rely on crop and/or livestock production as a main source of income. Rapid action to restore and rebuild vital livelihoods assets is urgently required to enable affected households to meet their immediate needs, as well as to reduce the longer-term effects of the earthquake.

In response to the earthquake, FAO is seeking [USD 45 million to deliver both immediate and longer-term support](#) to severely affected rural communities. FAO is proposing to support earthquake-affected communities with an interlinked set of earthquake emergency response and resilience-building interventions. The overall objective is to save and sustain rural farming livelihoods, and increase and diversify their agricultural production, coupled with the rehabilitation of the affected irrigation/water-related infrastructure, and other affected and important community-level agricultural infrastructure.

Food policy-related developments and international support to improve food security

Algeria

March 2023: A new independent agency was created to accelerate the implementation of the seawater desalination policy, with the aim of supplying 60 percent of Algeria's drinking water needs from seawater desalination by 2030, thus reducing the country's reliance on seawater for water security. The agency will oversee the completion, operation, and maintenance of the seawater desalination plants under construction, as well as carry out studies and analyses related to new desalination projects. It will also coordinate the implementation of these projects and ensure that the water produced is distributed to consumers.

Bahrain

March 2023: Gulf Ventures Capital launched Green Corp, a new business platform, to develop sustainable food projects in GCC. Green Corp will focus on agriculture, aquaculture, and food processing. The platform will identify business opportunities in high-growth, demand-driven food companies and work to strengthen domestic and regional food distribution channels.

March 2023: In line with the government's policy to enhance and invest in food security, the Minister of Municipalities and Agriculture Affairs offered lands suitable for agricultural investment with the requirement of using modern agricultural technologies when implementing the projects in order to ensure production efficiency and the sustainable use of natural resources. A number of foreign investment companies have applied for investment in Bahrain, and their project proposals are being evaluated by the Ministry.

May 2023: APM Terminals Bahrain, the operator of Khalifa Bin Salman Port, announced the launch of a solar power project worth USD 10 million to make the port energy self-sufficient by the end of 2023. The project will involve installing 20 000 solar photovoltaic panels, which will generate 18.5 gigawatts of electricity per year. This renewable energy source will be used to power various port operations, including container handling, crane operations, and lighting. The project will make Khalifa Bin Salman Port the region's first seaport to be fully powered by renewable energy.

Egypt

March 2023: The Egyptian Government announced that it will increase its spending on food subsidies by 20 percent in its 2023/24 fiscal year budget in an effort to offset the rising cost of food, which has been a major concern for Egyptian households in recent months.

March 2023: The export of sugar is banned to secure sufficient quantities for domestic consumption. Excess quantities of sugar that can be exported will be estimated by the Ministry of Supply and Internal Trade, and any exports above this amount will require ministerial approval. The ban comes as global sugar prices have risen, making it more profitable for local companies to export sugar. To make up for the shortage in sugar cane, Egypt cultivated 620 000 feddans of sugar beets this year, an increase of 10 000 feddans from 2022.

March 2023: The ban on the export of corn, fava beans, lentils, pasta, flour, wheat, and all kinds of vegetable oil is extended for an additional three months; the ban was originally imposed in March 2022 in response to rising global food prices and food security concerns. The Ministry of Trade said that it would allow exports of any excess of these goods that are not needed for the local market, but only after approval from the Ministry. The amount of excess goods that may be exported would be determined by the Ministry of Supply.

May 2023: The Government blames the deferred payments for its large wheat purchases, sometimes by several months, on the shortage of foreign currency. The State-owned grains buyer had delayed opening 180-day letters of credit (LCs) for wheat imports until after shipments had been made. However, to date, suppliers have continued shipping grain, and the wheat reserves used to make subsidized bread have remained unaffected.

May 2023: The price of several subsidized products increased by 20 percent including rice (from EGP 10.50/USD 0.34 to EGP 12.60/USD 0.41 per kilogram) and vegetable oil (from EGP 25/USD 0.81 to EGP 30/USD 0.97 per bottle). On 10 May, the Ministry of Supply implemented a reduction in the maximum claimable amount under a subsidized food program. The new regulations will require families with fewer than four members to select, monthly, either one kilogram of rice or one 800-gram package of pasta under the program.

July 2023: The UN WFP approved a USD 431 million grant to support Egypt's food security goals. The grant will be used to implement the country's 2023–2028 strategic plan, which focuses on promoting the agricultural sector, boosting financial inclusion, supporting small farmers, empowering women in rural areas, and supporting refugees in Egypt.

Iraq

March 2023: The European Union and Iraq plan to further cooperate on sustainable development, climate change and regional connectivity, and to also mobilize sustainable finance to meet investment needs in Iraq and the region. Noting Iraq's high vulnerability to the impact of climate change and environmental degradation, both acknowledge the importance of defining clear targets and stepping up action to address the most pressing challenges linked to emissions reduction – including fugitive emissions – water management and adaptation to climate change.

Jordan

May 2023: The ninth Jordanian-American committee session was held in Washington, D.C. to discuss ways to improve agriculture, food security, trade exchange, and labour relations between the two countries. The committee discussed methods of improving trade exchange in goods and services, the necessity of diversifying Jordanian exports to the United States, and strategies to overcome challenges in exports. A joint subcommittee was created to revise environmental legislation to boost mutual trade, as well as the level of the two countries' ecological protection in implementing Article 5 of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA). American investors were also invited to take advantage of Jordan's new investment law.

June 2023: Jordan targets new investments worth USD 2.5 billion between 2023 and 2026, with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states as the main targets. The strategy, which was developed with the help of the World Bank, aims to attract investments from Canada, China, Germany, India, Japan, and the United States, as part of an economic vision that aims to attract USD 30.5 billion in investment in the next 10 years. Jordanian Investment Minister Kholoud Saqqaf has invited entrepreneurs and investors from Saudi Arabia to take advantage of the country's attractive investment benefits and opportunities; Saudi Arabian investments are among the most significant in Jordan and spread across many high-value sectors, including agriculture.

Lebanon

March 2023: The European Union announced the provision of EUR 60 million in humanitarian aid to Lebanon to help the most vulnerable people, including Lebanese citizens and Syrian refugees. The aid will be used to provide food, cash, education, and health services.

March 2023: The World Bank announced the provision of USD 300 million for social protection and USD 200 million for agriculture in Lebanon, with the possibility of more investments in the coming years.

June 2023: The World Bank approved USD 200 million to help Lebanon's agrifood sector recover from crises. The project will support farmers and SMEs with grants and loans to invest in productivity-enhancing technologies and practices. It will also improve access to markets for agricultural products by investing in infrastructure and trade promotion. Additionally, the project will strengthen the sector's resilience to climate change by supporting the adoption of climate-smart practices and regulations.

Morocco

April 2023: The Government lifted the value-added tax on agricultural inputs to help lower the prices of fresh produce and other agrifoods. This is in line with efforts to stem inflation, which has reached a 40-year high.

April 2023: The IMF approved a two-year arrangement for Morocco to benefit from a USD 5 billion (MAD 51 billion) Flexible Credit Line (FCL), providing insurance against potential shocks and economic challenges. According to the IMF, Morocco has "very strong policies, institutional policy frameworks, and economic fundamentals despite the successive shocks throughout the past three years, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the repercussions of the war in Ukraine, as well as environmental challenges, including two drought periods".

June 2023: The EBRD approved the provision of a EUR 50 million loan to Bank of Africa (BoA) to finance MSMEs in Morocco to import a large variety of goods. This will support BoA in issuing guarantees in favour of confirming banks and provide cash financing for pre-export, post-import financing and local distribution. The programme supports Morocco's green economy, and is a key contributor to the EBRD's [Green Trade Facilitation Programme](#), which stimulates the supply of high-performance technologies and services with its first target sector being foods and food commodities.

Oman

May 2023: The Oman Investment Authority (OIA) announces its plan to invest USD 5 billion in Egypt over the next three years. The agency is working with Egypt's Sovereign Fund to study investment opportunities, including in the food sector. The visit of the Omani delegation is part of a series of high-level visits undertaken recently between the two countries.

June 2023: The Government approved over a dozen aquaculture projects, including a land-based Atlantic salmon farm and a tuna-ranching project with the aim of becoming a global seafood power through investing in its fisheries and aquaculture sectors. The Ministry aims to diversify fish farming projects in its governorates by establishing farming projects using floating

cages and indoor fish farming. Led by Fisheries Development Oman, which was founded by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the OIA, the effort is a comprehensive revamping of the country's approach to aquaculture, commercial fishing, processing, infrastructure, and services.

June 2023: A new law is enacted to promote sustainable water management, encouraging private sector investment and the use of cutting-edge technologies. The law also aims to improve the efficiency of water use and sanitation facilities. The law emphasizes the application of effective water treatment and distribution technologies to improve the efficiency of water use and sanitation facilities.

Palestine

May 2023: The WFP will suspend food aid to 200 000 Palestinians due to lack of funding. The most affected families are in Gaza and the West Bank. The WFP offers monthly vouchers and food baskets; both programs will be affected. Gaza is home to 2.3 million people, 45 percent of whom are unemployed, and 80 percent depend on aid.

Saudi Arabia

March 2023: The Government approved the Trade Remedies Law in November 2022 to regulate anti-dumping, countervailing, and to safeguard investigations on imports into the country. The Implementing Regulations for the Trade Remedies Law were approved in March 2023. During recent years, Saudi Arabia has increasingly become an active user of trade remedy measures. **Vision 2030** requires the Government to support and promote the establishment and development of Saudi Arabian domestic industries and protect them from unfair foreign trade practices. The publication of the Saudi Trade Remedies Law and the Implementing Regulations provides legislative assistance to domestic industries.

May 2023: Saudi Arabia is accelerating its expansion into the global food industry with a pact to buy shares of Brazil's biggest poultry producer (BRF S.A.). State-owned Saudi Agricultural and Livestock Investment Co. (SALIC) and Brazil's Marfrig Global Foods S.A. agreed to purchase as much as USD 890 million in new BRF shares. The transaction will give SALIC a stake of between 10 percent and 15 percent. Saudi Arabia has been BRF's largest chicken importer in recent years, accounting for around 7 percent of its total sales. The deal is the latest in a series of agricultural investments by Saudi Arabia, which sources most of its food from abroad, in an effort to secure its food supply.

June 2023: Saudi Arabia is set to approve a new policy on combating forced labour that also applies to agricultural supply chains. It is the first GCC nation to ratify the ILO Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention. The policy is part of Saudi Arabia's ongoing efforts to combat forced labour and will integrate all sectors of government to combat forced labour and create effective coordination and collaboration mechanisms.

June 2023: IFFCO, the leading FMCG brand based in the United Arab Emirates, is launching its first 100 percent plant-based meat product, Thryve, in Saudi Arabia. The multinational group set up the Near East's first 100 percent plant-based meat factory in Dubai, earlier this year.

Thryve is made from fava beans and is inspired by Near Eastern cuisine. It is a sustainable and healthy alternative to traditional meat. Thryve will be available in stores and hypermarkets across Saudi Arabia in the summer of 2023. Plant-based meat is increasingly being considered as an alternative to meat products in order to reduce the global carbon footprint of existing food systems, a concept that is aligned with [Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030](#).

Tunisia

May 2023: The IMF is close to finalizing a USD 1.9 billion potential IMF financial support for Tunisia that contains a programme of economic policies and reform. The deal has been delayed because Tunisia needs to secure additional financing and implement reforms. Public finance in Tunisia is under great strain, the [budget deficit is expected to widen to 9.7 percent of the country's GDP this year](#) due to a stronger US dollar and sharp rises in grain and energy prices.

May 2023: A decision to raise prices of some foods including milk, eggs and poultry was made to ensure the profit margin for agricultural producers following protests by farmers against a spike in animal feed barley prices due to the war in Ukraine and an increase in energy costs.

May 2023: The Italian Development Cooperation Agency, in partnership with the World Food Programme, set up a new support mechanism to provide EUR 44.4 million to help farmers adapt to climate change and reduce production costs, with the aim of improving Tunisia's food security and sovereignty. Three collectors will receive financial assistance to help reduce the amount of credit repayments made by farmers.

June 2023: The EBRD and the Tunisian Investment Authority (TIA) launched a digital investment platform to improve the investment climate in Tunisia. The platform will provide fully automated digital services to attract foreign direct investment and create jobs. It will track the entire investor journey from declaration to aftercare. The EBRD has also collaborated with TIA and Tunisia's Ministry of Economy to launch an interactive digital guide for investors.

United Arab Emirates

March 2023: Turkey and the United Arab Emirates signed a Free Trade Agreement, which is expected to [boost non-oil trade between the two countries to USD 40 billion in five years](#). The volume of mutual trade between the countries is currently close to USD 19 billion annually. Turkey and the United Arab Emirates also signed another 12 cooperation agreements, spanning sectors such as [agriculture, and climate change](#). The green light was given for 24 national initiatives that will [bolster the country's re-export industry by 100 percent in the next seven years](#). The Government announced its intention in September 2022 to [pursue bilateral economic agreements with eight countries](#) – Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Israel, Kenya, South Korea, Turkey, and the United Kingdom – with the goal of concluding several agreements within one year.

April 2023: In an effort to promote sustainable farming and diversify income in the country, 71 economic activities on agricultural lands were approved. The Abu Dhabi Agriculture and Food Safety Authority (ADAFSA) is working to diversify the economic activities that can be carried out on farms to consolidate the food security system and increase local plant and animal

production, in addition to promoting agritourism to benefit from the recreational activities available at many of the crop and livestock farms.

May 2023: The Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate (AIM for Climate), a joint initiative between the United Arab Emirates and the United States of America which aims to make farming more sustainable, received over USD 13 billion in funding. The fund will support initiatives to reduce agriculture emissions and help farmers adapt to climate change. The United Arab Emirates is scheduled to host the COP28 climate change conference in November and December this year, with the hope that it will be “a game-changer for food systems.”

June 2023: Emirates Development Bank launched a USD 27 million Agritech Loans Programme to support food security in the United Arab Emirates. The programme offers a variety of financing options to help farms adopt advanced technology and cutting-edge solutions to facilitate the implementation of precision agriculture techniques, state-of-the-art irrigation systems and advanced crop monitoring tools, propelling the sector towards more sustainable practices and heightened productivity. The [United Arab Emirates' National Food Security Strategy 2051](#) aims to make the country the world's best on the Global Food Security Index by 2051. The strategy outlines plans to develop a comprehensive national system that enables sustainable food production by using modern technologies while enhancing local production.

July 2023: Ras Al Khaimah Economic Zone (RAKEZ) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture (ICFA) to foster mutual growth and development within the food and agriculture sectors of the two countries. The MoU will cover areas such as knowledge exchange, trade promotion, investment, and research and development. This initiative will primarily focus on advancing agricultural innovation, crop improvement, sustainable farming practices, and food processing technologies.



Section II: Supporting agribusiness entrepreneurs as key drivers of developing sustainable food systems and value chains

In the NENA region, 41 percent of the population lives in rural areas. [Agriculture contributes 14 percent of the region's GDP \(excluding the oil-rich countries\) and provides employment to 38 percent of the economically active population.](#) Agrifood systems in the region face several challenges, such as the “triple burden of malnutrition” (coexistence of increasing undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and overnutrition), land- and water-scarcity, growing population and urbanization, increasing food import bills and debt levels, low incomes for farmers, missed job and wealth creation opportunities, and growing youth unemployment. The transformation of agrifood systems, including the development of agribusiness, agro-industry, and the entrepreneurs behind them, can address these challenges.

[Agribusiness entrepreneurs are key drivers in developing sustainable food systems and value chains](#), contributing to rural development and more inclusive growth. In addition to bringing economic benefits, such as job and income generation, entrepreneurs also have the potential to bring positive social change, such as gender and youth empowerment. Agripreneurs are the risk-takers, the market movers and shakers, who create jobs, stimulate economic development, can advance gender equality goals, and protect valuable natural resources.

Based on [FAO's Strategic Framework](#), Member Countries in the NENA region have identified four major priority areas for FAO regional actions for the transformation of agrifood systems to address the food security and nutrition-related challenges. As part of Regional Priority 1, [Rural transformation and inclusive value chains](#), FAO promotes agribusiness and agro-industry development and aims to support the agripreneurs who are the driving force behind the emergence and growth of these businesses.

Agribusiness entrepreneurs, or agripreneurs, create and generate value addition through their products and services. These [additional values create](#): (1) income; (2) decent jobs in the formal sector; (3) cheaper, safer and more convenient and nutritious food; (4) tax revenues that can contribute to improved (public) services, infrastructure and social programmes; and (5) general positive economic, social and environmental impacts such as youth inclusion, women's economic empowerment and pathways to green growth.

To make their business venture a success, [entrepreneurs especially those experiencing vulnerability or marginalization need affordable and equitable access to critical resources](#) such as business services, technology, finance, information and research, markets, training and education as well as physical inputs (e.g. packaging, land, storage and natural resources) and human capital (e.g. skilled and unskilled labour). In the following part, the Bulletin presents FAO's work and projects in the Arab region that promote agripreneurs and agribusiness development by providing access to these essential resources.

Regional FAO programs promoting entrepreneurship

Advancing innovative youth-led social entrepreneurship projects

In 2021, FAO partnered with [Enactus](#), a global experiential learning organization, [to advance innovative youth-led social entrepreneurship projects](#) that promote food security and combat rural poverty in the NENA region. A total of 18 innovative projects were supported in Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia through mentoring, equipment procurement and technical services, as well as financial awards distributed among the projects totalling USD 20 000. The projects offered compelling solutions to complex problems, such as electronic pest repellents for palm weevils, locally manufactured, sustainable and nutrient-rich animal feed, and low-cost, high-quality building materials using agricultural waste. All of these are conceptualized and implemented on the ground by university students in their own communities. Furthermore, six teams were invited to Dubai to present their innovative projects at the Dubai Expo – Future for Food Summit with the following innovative solutions: waste and wastewater treatment, locally produced feed, natural orange jam production, robotics, and the use of AI in combating palm weevils.

AgriNation Startup Cup

In 2022, FAO, [Industry Disruptors Game Changers \(IDGC\)](#) and [Berytech](#) collaborated to launch the annual [AgriNation Startup Cup](#) in the Near East and North Africa, a regional startup competition that supports youth-led early-stage startups. The initiative strives to foster innovation, decent employment, and youth inclusion in agrifood systems by helping innovative solution-oriented youth-led enterprises achieve market and investment readiness. This, in turn, would transform local and national agrifood systems to be more sustainable, equitable, nutritious and resilient, while also strengthening national entrepreneurial ecosystems.

The initiative is supported at the national level by a network of partners or impact makers who guide young entrepreneurs in each country to make the most of this opportunity – in order to upgrade their skills and establish a successful business. By working with and connecting other stakeholders at the national level, impact makers also help to build an enabling ecosystem that nurtures and incentivizes social innovation in the agrifood sector.

In 2022, [ten winning teams](#) received high-quality incubation and grant prizes of up to USD 2 000. In addition, the top four teams were sponsored to participate in the Global Agripreneurship Summit in Thessaloniki, Greece. The innovative and locally cultivated solutions ranged from rural finance solutions, sustainable fertilizer, digital water management, waste valorization, vertical farming, and nutritious and sustainably produced foods.

FAO country programs fostering entrepreneurship

Improving entrepreneurial business skills of startups in Lebanon

In Lebanon, the [FAO technical cooperation programme](#) has found that local rural small-scale producers lack proper access to markets, business skills, resources, information systems and peer mentoring, which is critical for entrepreneurs to survive and succeed in their first years of business. Small-scale producers and smallholders are often not targeted by big government programmes and private investment funds.

The project aimed to develop a Rural Entrepreneurship Academy, the first of its kind, and **provided smallholder entrepreneurs and startups with the necessary tools, technical and institutional capacities** to survive in the market, ranging from building their institutional capacities (such as financial management and conducting feasibility studies) to training on business planning, marketing, advertising, business communication, access to capital and funds, accounting and record keeping, cost analysis and stock control.

The project strengthened the resilience of smallholder producers through improved access to food, inputs, knowledge and markets, with a special focus on women, to expand economic and livelihood opportunities that benefit local economies and the most vulnerable communities. More specifically, business challenges, needs and weaknesses were analysed, and support was provided for **startups** working in agribusinesses, forests and rangelands-based to **develop their entrepreneurial and business skills**. The results achieved by the project included assessing the business challenges, needs, and weaknesses of startups, which helped startups improve their entrepreneurial business skills and management capacities.

Promoting entrepreneurship with farm business school

[Farm business school](#) (FBS) is a curriculum-based participatory approach developed by FAO to strengthen capacities of service providers and farmers in transitioning towards market-orientation and “farming as a business.” FBS focuses on farm business management and aims to develop farmers’ capacities and entrepreneurial skills to foster a mindshift towards managing

the farm as a profitable enterprise that is responsive to market demands. By fostering the use of key decision-making tools like farm business plans, the approach nurtures participants' critical thinking to analyse their situation, identify opportunities for improvement, assess risks, and make informed strategic decisions to enhance their farm business for increased income. The comprehensive [FBS training package](#) serves as a master reference for the design, implementation and evaluation of FBS programmes tailored to the local context.

The FBS approach was introduced for the first time in the Arab Region in **Lebanon** in 2019 by FAO in cooperation with the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture through a project funded by the Kingdom of the Netherlands promoting agricultural livelihoods and employment through investment in land reclamation and water reservoirs. At the end of the pilot, 91 farmers, including 25 women, were able to improve their knowledge of farm records, costs-benefit analysis and profitability, simple farm investment analysis, market appraisal and farm business planning, among other topics.

The FBS approach was replicated in Lebanon through a project funded by the Government of Canada supporting women's cooperatives in the agrifood sector and as part of a project funded by the European Union supporting the resilient livelihoods and food security of host communities and **Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon**, envisaging the establishment of 150 FBSs. In this context, FBS is combined with the issuing of small agricultural grants and on-farm dairy equipment for dairy cow keepers.

Mauritania: Fostering digital skills of young entrepreneurs

A [FAO programme](#) implemented in Mauritania in 2021–2022 supporting **digital innovation in agriculture** for economic inclusion and rural youth employment, confirmed that creating an enabling environment for innovation and entrepreneurship is key to creating decent jobs for young people in the Mauritanian agrifood system. Doing so requires engaging various stakeholders, including government, academia and innovation incubators, and the private sector. The programme provided support for youth-led startups in the agri-food sector and consisted of the following elements:

- A **national startup competition** was launched by FAO in partnership with the innovation incubator Hadina, with the aim of encouraging entrepreneurship in the agro-food sector. The competition targeted early stage startups, led by young people aged 35 or younger. Out of 150 applications, ten winners were selected to benefit from a Hadina incubation program. Following incubation, all ten startups reported improved ability to run their business and several reported better access to markets and revenue.
- A **digital literacy training** was developed by FAO and Hadina to help rural dwellers and youth better harness digital technologies to improve their livelihoods and their inclusion in agrifood value chains. The training programme included:
 - » Learning to create posts and events on Facebook and Visual Content Creation on LinkedIn using simple tools (Canva, Illustrator, etc.), as well as an introduction to video conferencing tools (Zoom).
 - » Learning to use Facebook Marketplace and WhatsApp Business to create online stores, marketing products, managing sales and managing customer relationships using mobile banking tools to receive payments for their sales (with the help from

local apps like Bankili and Masrivi). Accessing information online: search for services and providers, exchange rates, weather forecasts, etc.

- » Around 63 percent of training participants confirmed that the training had helped them better integrate into the market to sell their produce.
- A **digital innovation hub** or [Farmer Observatory](#), was launched in Mauritania to serve as a digital agriculture platform for students, teachers and community members. One of its primary functions is to provide students with hands-on training in the use of drone and satellite technologies to collect data from local farms and to analyse that data to generate extension advice that can help farmers improve their yields. The Observatory has redesigned two drones for this function. It also aids in leveraging digital technologies to boost the country's agricultural productivity and strengthen its agrifood value chains while achieving the ultimate goal of preparing young people to become agents of change and innovation in the Mauritanian agrifood system, and enabling them to pursue quality jobs requiring high skills in the sector.
- A **financial support service**, [Mon Projet, mon Avenir \(MPMA\)](#), was developed by the Mauritanian Government to support youth entrepreneurs with financial services, such as the granting of small and medium loans. FAO partnered with MPMA to strengthen financial services for young entrepreneurs in the agrifood sector. Fifty young agribusiness entrepreneurs benefited from loans in addition to financial management training in order to improve their repayment rates and ensure their ability to increase their profitability. Following the training, most training participants reported an increase in the skills and knowledge needed to manage their financial resources more effectively and efficiently.

Palestine: Empowering young entrepreneurs to create innovative green opportunities

In 2019, FAO and Denmark partnered with the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture and four local universities on a two-year-long endeavor to bolster green jobs and support young Palestinian entrepreneurs, with a special focus on fostering social development, addressing gender inequalities, supporting innovative agrifood businesses, and stimulating local green economic growth. More than 400 graduates and young Palestinians benefitted from the "[Green jobs and sustainable income opportunities for Palestinian female and male youth in the agrifood sector](#)" project. The **first phase of the project** was implemented by December 2021 with a total investment of USD 400 000, in addition to the support of 23 young Palestinians (13 males and 10 females) with the means to become owners of their own agrifood businesses.

FAO and Denmark continue to encourage male and female youth in Palestine to engage in the high potential agrifood value chains through the rollout of a **second phase of the project** in 2022–2025, which aims at the following:

- Strengthening capacities of 480 Palestinian male and female youth to identify and utilize green jobs and green enterprise opportunities within the private, public, and civil partners in the agrifood sector;
- Supporting youth-led innovative, profitable, and sustainable entrepreneurship by 60 Palestinian male and female youth in the agrifood sector; and

- Vocational Training Centres and Centres of Competence are capacitated to equip 112 under-skilled and unemployed male and female youth with knowledge and skills that match the labour market demands of the agrifood sector.

The Syrian Arab Republic: Supporting young agripreneurs

The Smallholder Support Programme (SSP) for Agriculture Transformation is an European Union and BMZ funded programme that aims to boost the agricultural sector in the Syrian Arab Republic by improving smallholders' productivity and access to markets. Among other activities that aim at boosting different value chains, FAO has designed Nabta, an initiative to create a new cadre of local experts willing to disseminate entrepreneurship awareness among their communities and to stimulate the creation of small agricultural businesses to give opportunities to vulnerable young farmers while bridging existing local market gaps.

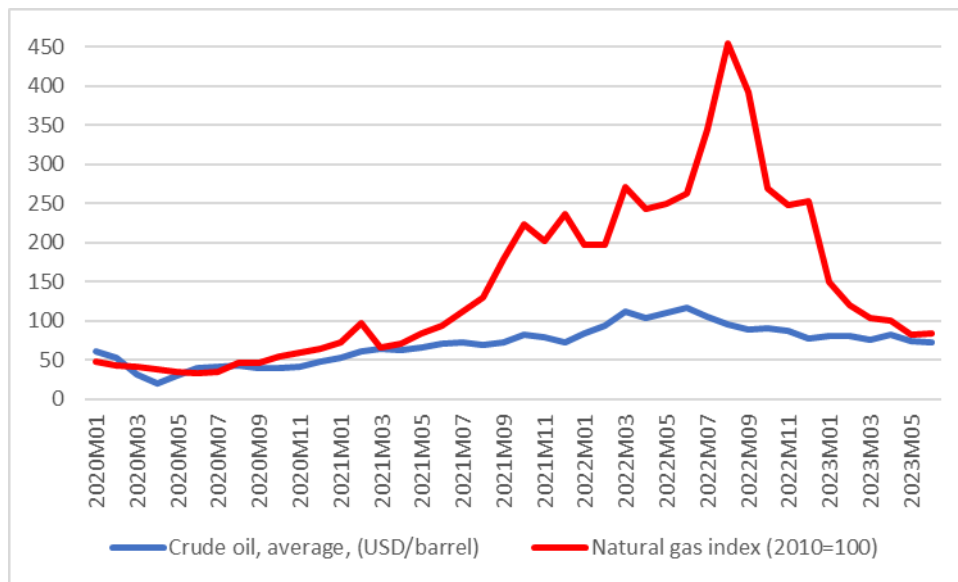
Nabta has been designed in accordance with the international guidelines of entrepreneurship such as ILO's [Start and Improve Your Business](#) and [Global Entrepreneurship Monitor](#) guidelines on SMEs support and enhancement, incubation approaches, entrepreneurship education, and business development services (BDS). It is being implemented by the SSP team and national implementing partners in the following three phases:

- Phase I: Youth and women entrepreneurship workshops to build the capacity of professionals willing to work in the entrepreneurship education field;
- Phase II: Training of trainers course to instruct and certify trainers in agricultural entrepreneurship; and
- Phase III: Entrepreneurship training to transfer the entrepreneurship knowledge and capacities built to smallholders.

Once the business awareness and skills have reached smallholders, **FAO grants awards** to selected beneficiaries to allow them to start up their businesses and provides them with some technical skills to increase the potential of their businesses to succeed. In addition, a **Community of Practice** (CoP) was launched to enable new entrepreneurs to network and liaise with relevant actors of the business environment in the Syrian Arab Republic. This CoP allows agripreneurs to support each other, exchange good practices and face challenges collectively, and become a solid entity in the long term.

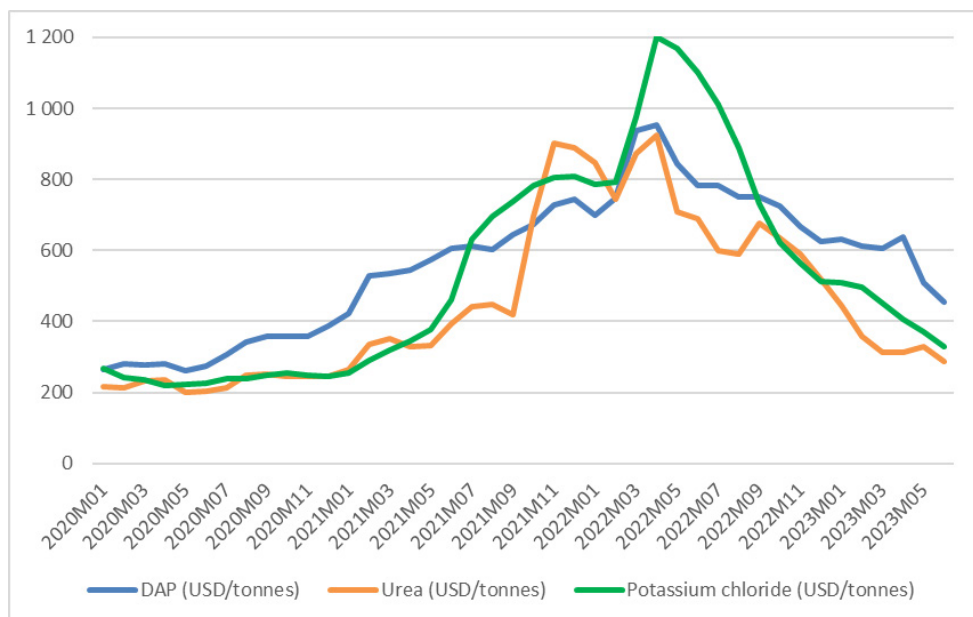
ANNEX

Figure A1. Crude oil (USD/barrel) and natural gas index (2010=100) of the World Bank



Source: World Bank (W.B.). 2023. Commodity Price Data (The Pink Sheet). In: W.B. Washington. Cited July 2023. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/commodity-markets>

Figure A2. Prices of fertilizers: Diammonium phosphate (DAP), urea, and potassium chloride (USD/tonnes)



Source: World Bank (W.B.). 2023. Commodity Price Data (The Pink Sheet). In: W.B. Washington. Cited July 2023. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/commodity-markets>

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