Colombia

DIEM – Data in Emergencies Monitoring brief, round 5

Results and recommendations
June 2024

Data collection 24 November to 24 December 2023
Highlights

> Several of the impacts identified during this round of data collection (November–December 2023) continue to be associated with economic effects from the disruptions to global supply chains due to conflicts and the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there was an environment of greater socioeconomic stability compared to the previous assessment conducted in January–February 2023.

> Inflation remained the main shock reported by the surveyed households, although there was a decrease in those affected from 22 percent at the beginning of 2023 to 19 percent at the end of 2023.

> For the 60 percent of households engaged in agricultural activities, reported production difficulties were lower compared to the fourth round (70 percent). However, the majority of the population was still engaged in this type of activity.

> In the case of livestock production, the number of households reporting production difficulties was lower than in the previous survey, dropping from 53 percent to 43 percent.

> Forty-two percent of agricultural producers mentioned lack of rain or water for crop irrigation systems as the main shock. This may be associated with El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO).

> According to the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES), 56 percent of households were in moderate or recent severe food insecurity, and 2 percent in severe food insecurity. For severe food insecurity, prevalences were highest in the departments of La Guajira (4.4 percent), Chocó (4 percent) and Cesar (3.7 percent).

> Households reported the need for assistance in the short term to meet food needs, continue agricultural production and ensure access to food given the loss of purchasing power due to inflation.
Methodology

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) conducted a household survey through the Data in Emergencies Monitoring (DIEM-Monitoring) System, between 24 November and 24 December 2023, to assess the situation of agricultural livelihoods and food security of the rural population. The survey was conducted in 13 prioritized departments of the country: Antioquia, Arauca, Atlántico, Bolívar, Boyacá, Cesar, Chocó, Córdoba, La Guajira, Magdalena, Nariño, Putumayo and Sucre.

The data were collected through computer-assisted telephone interviews applied to a panel of informants corresponding to the third monitoring round (July 2022) and face-to-face interviews covering a sample of the panel. The final sample consisted of 4 390 rural household surveys in the thirteen prioritized departments. A comparative analysis has been carried out with the fourth round conducted in February 2023.

Figure 1. Countries with an established DIEM-Monitoring System


The final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. Final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined. The dotted line represents, approximately, the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

About DIEM-Monitoring

FAO established the DIEM-Monitoring System to collect, analyse and disseminate data on shocks and livelihoods in countries prone to multiple shocks. DIEM-Monitoring aims to inform decision making by providing regularly updated information on how different shocks are affecting the livelihoods and food security of agricultural populations.

At the core of the DIEM-Monitoring System are country-level dashboards. Readers are encouraged to explore these dashboards to gain more insight into the context of Colombia and other countries.

Learn more at https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org/pages/monitoring
Income and shocks

Forty-six percent of households suffered a decrease in their main source of income, particularly in the departments of Chocó (63 percent), Nariño (58 percent) and Putumayo (57 percent) (Figures 2 and 3). Sixty-two percent of households had incomes below the minimum monthly wage in Colombia,1 which corresponds to approximately USD 303 (BanRep, 2024a). Households that saw the largest reductions in income were those engaged in agricultural activities (46 percent), those internally displaced by Colombia’s armed conflict or crime (58 percent), self-identified indigenous populations (48 percent) and the black/Afro-Colombian population (49 percent). The decline in income was slightly larger for male-headed households (49 percent) than for female headed- households. Compared to the previous round (January–February 2023), there was an increase in the population affected by a decrease in income in the rural areas of the prioritized territories, with 42 percent of households reporting a decrease in income at the beginning of 2023. On the other hand, 11 percent of households mentioned loss of employment or job opportunities.

Figure 2. Households reporting a change in their main source of income (by department)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Much higher [greater than 50% increase]</th>
<th>A little higher</th>
<th>The same</th>
<th>A little less</th>
<th>Much less [less than half]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antioquia</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arauca</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlántico</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolívar</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyacá</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cesar</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chocó</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Córdoba</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Guajira</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magdalena</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nariño</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putumayo</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sucre</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


1 By the end of 2023, Colombia’s current legal monthly minimum wage stood at COP 1 160 000, approximately USD 303 (BanRep, 2024a).
Since the COVID-19 pandemic, Colombia has been experiencing an economic slowdown with increasingly smaller variations in its Gross Domestic Product until the second quarter of 2023. Negative variations have occurred since the third quarter of the same year (BanRep, 2024b). On the other hand, the unemployment trend in the country had a slight increase between February 2023 and February 2024 (DANE, 2024).

Inflation affected 19 percent of households, the main shock reported, and with the highest incidence in Atlántico (43 percent), Nariño (40 percent), La Guajira (33 percent) and Arauca (33 percent) departments. For this particular shock, it is recognized that compared to the fourth round (22 percent) there has been a decrease in the number of households affected (19 percent this round). The Bank of the Republic of Colombia (2024b) found a decrease in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) since January 2023, which for the first quarter was in double digits (13 percent), while by the end of 2023 it stood at 9 percent (BanRep, 2024b).

Illness or death of a household member was recurrent in 13 percent of households. Weather-related shocks occurred in 8 percent of households (both agricultural and non-agricultural households). Four percent of households suffered shocks related to increases in fuel prices and 1 percent mentioned impacts due to crime/armed conflict, mainly in the departments of Arauca, Nariño and Putumayo.

Several of the shocks experienced by households have their origin in complex situations such as COVID-19 and global conflicts that have led to disruptions in supply chains and an increase in the prices of products and services at the global level. These shocks were associated with macroeconomic factors that can be contained internally, such as inflation, rising food prices and risk management in the face of climate variability such as El Niño or La Niña.
Sixty percent of agricultural crop-producing households experienced production difficulties during the three months preceding the survey, mainly in the departments of La Guajira (74 percent) and Chocó (67 percent). These included shocks which were mainly associated with drought (42 percent), excess rainfall (23 percent), plant disease (22 percent), or pest outbreaks and diseases (22 percent) (Figure 5).
The El Niño phenomenon was officially declared in Colombia in November 2023, but its effects, related to drought across most of the national territory, begin to consolidate in April, May and June (NWS, 2024). These effects are more significant when it is recognized that 65 percent of these producers depend on rainwater for production, 20 percent on natural surface water and 2 percent on groundwater. Over the survey period, drought was more relevant than floods, and compared to the fourth round, 41 percent of producers were affected by lack of water compared to 24 percent at the beginning of 2023. One of the DIEM pillars is DIEM-Impact, which conducted an assessment evaluating the effects of the fires in Colombia at the beginning of 2024 (FAO, 2024).

In the case of households engaged in agricultural activities, the lack of fertilizer (9 percent), low quality seeds (3 percent) and difficulty accessing labour (3 percent) were reported as production difficulties. In the national context, a decrease in the prices of agro-inputs was identified (UPRA, 2024) and reflected by the informants, as 11 percent of households reported a lack of fertilizer in the fourth round compared to 9 percent this round. On the other hand, the values for recognizing low seed quality and difficulty accessing labour remained in similar proportions to past rounds.
Marketing difficulties were reported by 36 percent of producer households, mainly higher transport/marketing prices (42 percent), low selling prices for their products (30 percent), and few buyers and/or delayed payments (28 percent). In the case of fuel, there was a considerable increase for food transport using regular gasoline vehicles, as the price increased from COP 10 523 in January 2023 to COP 14 973 in November of the same year (CREG, 2024).

**Livestock**

Forty-three percent of households engaged in livestock production reported difficulties during the three months preceding the interview, a significant decrease compared to the fourth round (53 percent). The purchasing of feed for livestock was the main difficulty experienced according to 50 percent of the interviewees, a difficulty that also slightly decreased compared to the fourth round (52 percent) (Figure 6). Other factors that were problematic for producers included illness or injury to livestock (42 percent), and theft of livestock (6 percent).

![Figure 6. Livestock production difficulties (percentage of livestock producers)](https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org)

Marketing difficulties were identified by 30 percent of livestock producer households, mainly associated with lack of demand (30 percent), low selling prices for livestock (22 percent) and excess produce in the market (20 percent).

Twenty-nine percent of producers mentioned lower selling prices for livestock products, while 39 percent mentioned that prices were the same.
Analysis carried out by DIEM-Impact showed the adverse effects of forest fires related to the El Niño phenomenon on vegetation cover related to livestock activities in the Colombian Orinoco region, where 125,000 hectares are grasslands (FAO, 2024).

Food security

It was recognized that 56 percent of the rural population in the thirteen prioritized departments had moderate or severe prevalence of recent food insecurity, and 2 percent were categorized in severe, reflecting a decrease in the figures from the fourth round (64 percent for moderate or severe, and 9 percent for severe).

According to the household hunger scale (HHS), 24 percent of households were classified as moderate or severe based on the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC). This shows proportions of the population that are likely to have food consumption gaps that may be reflected in acute malnutrition and are marginally able to meet their food needs. The departments with the highest prevalences were Chocó, La Guajira and Magdalena (Figure 7).

There was a high rate of crisis and emergency livelihood coping strategies in Arauca, Chocó and Córdoba. The most commonly used strategies were buying food on credit, spending savings or borrowing money.

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2 Chi-Square tests were conducted to assess the association between HHS and 1) total reported household income, where a statistically significant association (p < 0.05) was found between the two variables; likewise, the reported 2) flood shock showed an association, suggesting that floods have an impact on the HHS variable; and finally the 3) consumption-based coping strategies index (rCSI) and the 4) livelihood coping strategies index (LCSI) variables showed a statistically significant association with (IPC, 2021). HHS.

For the case of the drought shocks variable, the Chi-Square test yielded borderline results (p ≈ 0.05). Although the null hypothesis of independence is not rejected, it is important to mention that the number of observed cases is close to the minimum required for the test to be optimal. It is important to consider that the lack of statistically significant association does not necessarily imply that there is no relationship between the variables. In some cases, lack of statistical power due to a small sample size or an inadequate data distribution may prevent the detection of a real relationship (IPC, 2021).
Figure 7. Household Food Insecurity Experience Scale by department (moderate or severe on the left; severe on the right)


Features

Seventy-seven percent of households mentioned a need for assistance in the three to six months following the survey. Magdalena, Cesar and Atlántico were the departments where the greatest need was reported with 90 percent, 88 percent and 86 percent respectively. Of this assistance, the need to receive food stands out, mentioned by 54 percent of the households reporting a need.

Thirteen percent of the households received some type of assistance in the three months preceding the survey, mainly cash, except in the departments of Arauca and Atlántico, where food and fishing supplies were received, respectively.

Regarding agricultural activities, the main needs were agro-inputs, cash, infrastructure for production such as irrigation and technical assistance.

For livestock activities, the need for livestock feed and veterinary assistance was mentioned. Similarly, some households mentioned the need for cash or food for family support.
Recommendations

Short-term recommendations (1–6 months)

> Generate anticipatory actions to mitigate the impact of shocks on food security and livelihoods, focusing on a possible increase in the probability of a cold ENSO (La Niña).

> Develop mechanisms for food price stability, limiting losses and wastage leading to improved availability and access.

> Intensify cash and livelihood support in departments such as Chocó, Nariño and Putumayo.

> Implement rapid recovery strategies for agricultural livelihoods in emergency situations.

> Prioritize emergency food assistance, technical assistance and provision of inputs in departments with production difficulties and low incomes, such as La Guajira and Chocó.

> Recover livestock stock and provide urgent economic assistance, especially in Putumayo.

> Prioritize emergency assistance and livelihood rehabilitation in departments with food insecurity and livelihood depletion, such as Arauca, Chocó, Córdoba, La Guajira and Magdalena.

> Complement technical assistance with the provision of seeds, tools and fertilizer to reduce risks in the coming months.

Medium- and long-term recommendations (6 months and more)

> Design a temporary social protection programme for affected vulnerable rural households.

> Promote the use of bio-agro-inputs due to difficulties accessing conventional inputs.

> Promote associative schemes, home gardens and crop diversification to access new markets and improve prices.

> Promote alternative diets to reduce dependence on concentrates and limit livestock mortality.
Generate access to technical assistance and preventive veterinary support to limit livestock losses.

Encourage collective markets and marketing information systems in departments with declining prices.

Actions to prevent cattle rustling and increase community security control.

Establish price control mechanisms and support income generation to guarantee access to food.

Generate recovery actions to avoid greater impacts in the future.
Notes


This brief is made possible by the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of FAO and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States of America Government.

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