Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Afghanistan

DIEM – Data in Emergencies Monitoring brief, round 8

Results and recommendations
June 2024

Data collection 29 January to 28 February 2024

Key highlights

- The survey identified widespread shocks in Afghanistan with much higher food prices and drought affecting 60 and 58 percent of households, respectively, indicating significant challenges to the stability of households.
- Despite the current deflation, less well-off households remained vulnerable to intrahousehold and economic shocks, reflecting broader macroeconomic vulnerabilities in Afghanistan.
- More than two-thirds of households reported a decrease in their main source of income in the three months preceding the survey. Ten percent of households had no income and lived on savings and debt.
- Harvest expectations were better than the seventh round for all crops except pulses, but still lower than what farmers consider normal. Several findings suggest that poor harvest concentrated among the most isolated and least well-off farmers, but it was not smallholders that reported a decrease in production the most.
- More farmers reported difficulties selling their outputs compared to the previous round, though fewer than the same period last year. These difficulties were particularly frequent for rice and other cereals.
- Herds and flock sizes are growing, especially because of a decrease in mortality. For small ruminants, mortality and distress sales remained very frequent, although the decrease from the previous round is generalized across all species.
- All food consumption indicators have shown an improvement, especially the most severe outcomes. The livelihood coping strategies index (LCSI) has shown an improvement in the adoption of the most severe coping strategies. Ghor, Hilmand, Jawzjan, Khost, Kunduz, Maidan Wardak, Nimroz, Paktika and Samangan present the worst outcomes across the indicators, except for the household dietary diversity score (HDDS). Agricultural activities remain important, as households involved in both crop and livestock production experienced better outcomes.
- It is recommended to implement targeted assistance programmes to support households most affected by natural disasters and economic downturns.

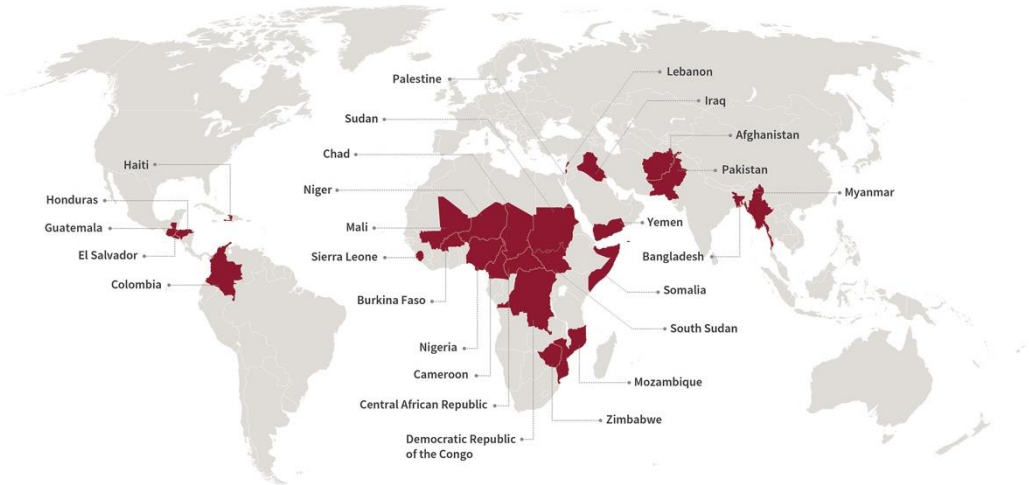
Methodology

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) launched a household survey in Afghanistan through the Data in Emergencies Monitoring (DIEM-Monitoring) System to monitor agricultural livelihoods and food security. This eighth-round survey reached a random sample of 9 494 households across all 34 provinces of Afghanistan.

Data collection was carried out through face-to-face interviews from 24 January to 29 February 2024, during the winter. Enumeration areas were sampled in rural areas. A two-stage cluster sampling method was applied. During the first stage, an equal number of clusters per province using probability proportional to size was selected. During the second stage, a fixed number of households per cluster were randomly selected and interviewed. Data were weighted by demographics and the sample is representative at provincial level.

The sixth-round survey was conducted from 19 January to 15 February 2023 during the same season as the current survey. Results from this round have been drawn from to make comparisons throughout this brief.

Figure 1. Countries with an established DIEM-Monitoring System



Source of data: FAO. 2023. DIEM-Monitoring. In: *FAO Data in Emergencies Hub.* Rome. [Cited 1 July 2023]. https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org
Source of map: United Nations Geospatial. 2023. Map of the World. In: *United Nations.* [Cited 1 July 2023]. https://www.un.org/geospatial/content/map-world-1

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 Afghanistan and other countries.

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

Income and shocks

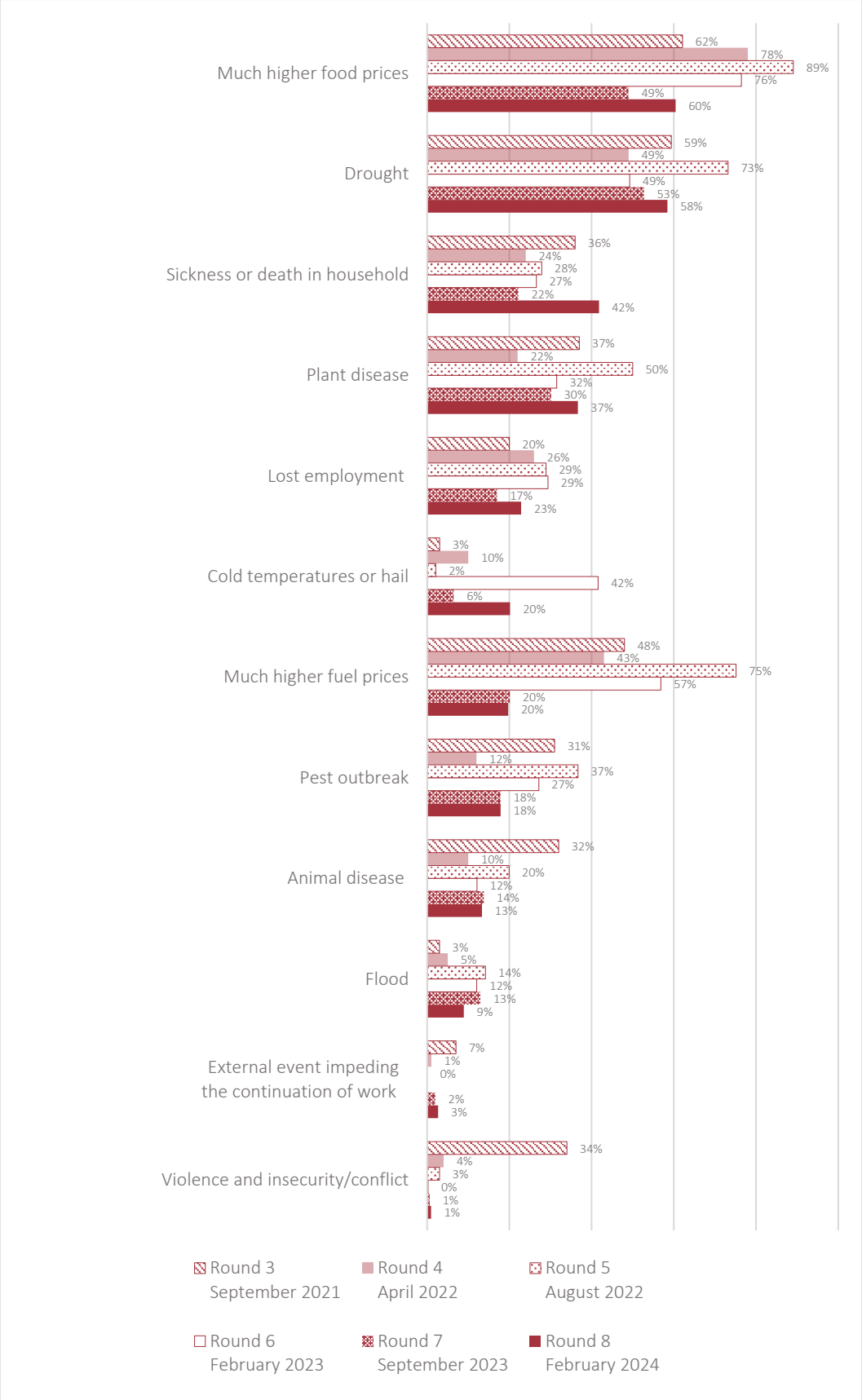
The most frequently reported shocks were much higher food prices and drought, cited by 60 and 58 percent, respectively (Figure 2). A high prevalence of high food prices is strange in a deflationary context. The World Bank Afghanistan Economic Monitor (2024) indicates that prices have decreased, including prices of food items – bread had a year-to-year variation of -6.3 percentage points, and for fuel it was -33.1, the latter consistent with this round's data. However, when considering not only exposure but also vulnerability, this finding can be reconciled with deflation. The same report highlighted that this "ongoing core deflation reflects a troubling inability of both private and public sectors to stimulate sufficient demand" (World Bank, 2024). In fact, data from the current round indicate that this shock was strongly associated with intrahousehold shocks. Reducing incomes makes households vulnerable to food inflation, even when prices are decreasing. Intrahousehold and economic shocks were associated with wealth proxies and the gender of the head of household, while natural hazards were associated with geography. Female-headed households more frequently reported higher food prices, and sickness or death in the household compared to male-headed households.

Ten percent of households reported no income in the three months preceding the survey and lived on savings and debt. This finding is quite typical of the season, as a high percentage of households rely on the exploitation of natural resources. Exploitation of natural resources and agricultural trade are much less profitable activities than before, probably due to deflation. Eighty-nine percent of households whose income is derived from natural resource exploitation reported a decline, and 90 percent of those whose income is derived from trade reported a decline. Fifty-nine percent of households reported no source of income.

If intrahousehold and economic shocks were associated with agricultural and non-agricultural household profiles, others were more location specific. Drought was cited in Farah (97 percent), Hilmand (91 percent), Maidan Wardak (91 percent), Kandahar (90 percent), Nimroz (90 percent), Bamyan (87 percent), Sar-e-Pul (86 percent), Kunar (85 percent), Badakhshan (84 percent), Badghis (82 percent) and Jawzjan (82 percent). Cold temperatures were more frequently cited in Laghman (83 percent), Nangarhar (72 percent) and Hilmand (61 percent). Very few cited cold temperatures in the areas affected by a more rigid cold wave in late February 2024 (such as Ghor, 7 percent). Floods were cited in Maidan Wardak (62 percent), Uruzgan (45 percent) and Nangarhar (33 percent). The highest percentage of households reporting pest outbreak was in Balkh (55 percent). Loss of employment was more frequent in Samangan (59 percent), Takhar (45 percent), Nangarhar (43 percent) and Kabul (41 percent).

Crop and livestock producers commonly reported drought as a significant challenge with livestock producers experiencing it slightly more (63 percent). Higher food prices affected all groups significantly, particularly non-agricultural households, indicating broader economic impact.

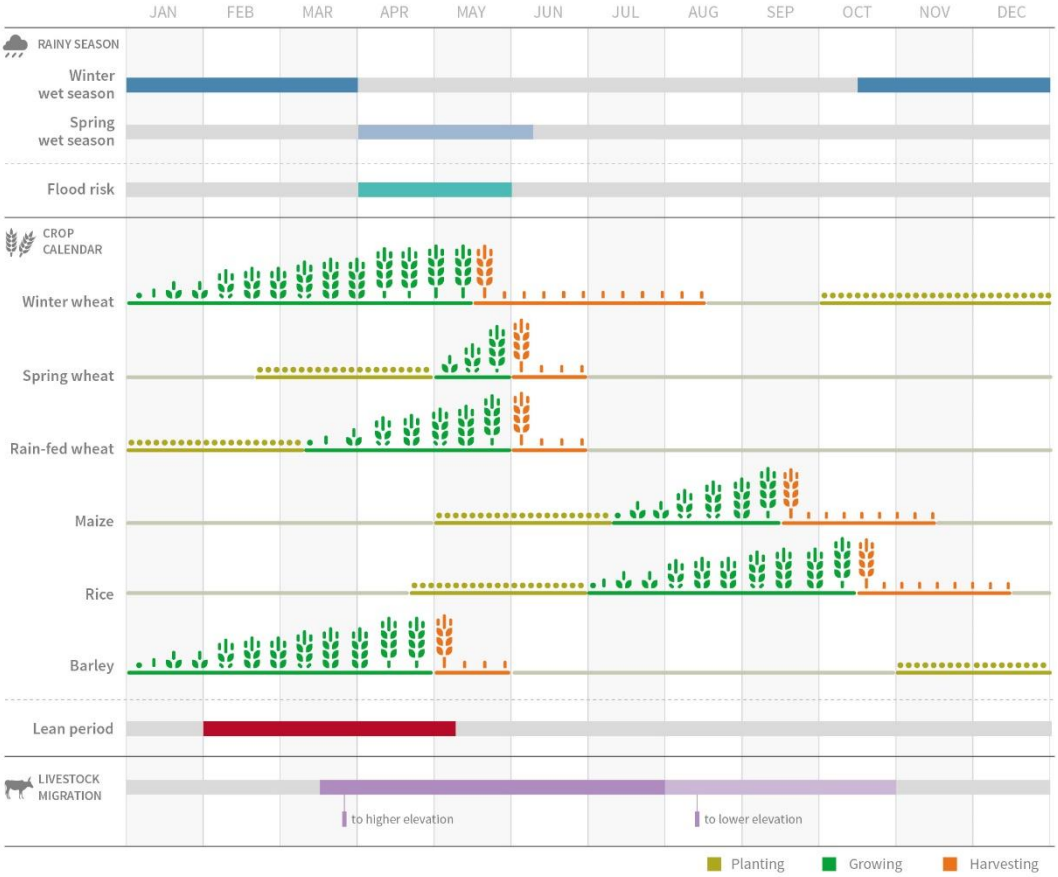
Figure 2. Main shocks reported (percentage of households)



Source: FAO. 2024. Afghanistan: DIEM-Monitoring assessments results (September 2021, April and August 2022, February and September 2023, and February 2024). In: *FAO Data in Emergencies Hub*. Rome. [Cited 27 March 2024]. https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org

Crops

Figure 3. Afghanistan agricultural calendar



Source: FAO. 2023. GIEWS Country Briefs: Afghanistan. In: *FAO*, 5 June 2023. Rome. [Cited 27 March 2024]. https://www.fao.org/giews/countrybrief/country.jsp?code=AFG

Fifty-nine percent of respondent crop producers reported planting less area compared to the same period last year. In general, the percentage of farmers planting less is decreasing, especially for tubers and cereals, although more than 60 percent of those farming these crops still reported a reduction in area. In addition, planting less of the main crop did not mean planting less at all. In most cases, and across different crops, farmers planted less when their cropping pattern was more diversified. Among farmers decreasing the area planted, lack of water and inputs were the most common reasons for reducing area. It is also worth noting that 56 percent of apple farmers reducing land cited less land available. Rice producers cited the lack of market opportunities (50 percent) and security (20 percent). For wheat farmers, reducing the area farmed was a way to manage risks. Of the 90 percent who reported lack of water as the reason for planting less, 45 percent reported that irrigation was not as available as before. The remaining 55 percent planted less to diversify investments.

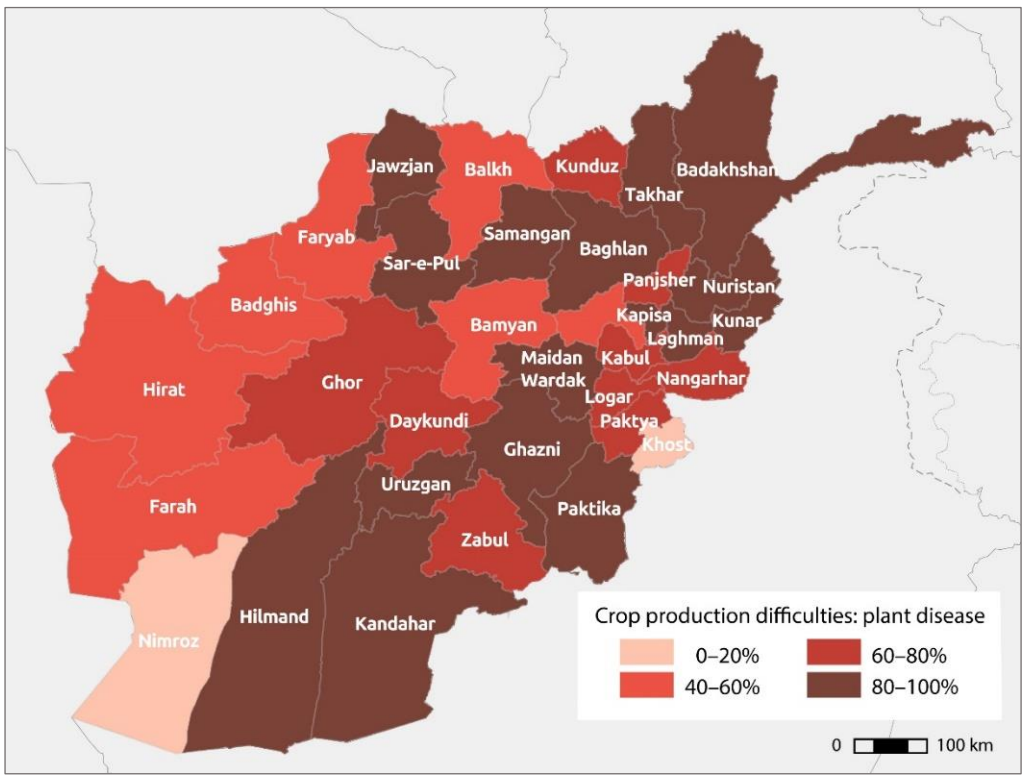
Only 3 percent reported that inputs were not available at the market. Twenty-seven percent cited higher prices and 70 percent claimed that they could no longer afford inputs. For most crops, planting less was associated with sourcing seeds from their own production, rather than at the market. This was more common among farmers possessing more than 1 hectare of land. Other associations were with natural hazards (drought for wheat, maize, pulses, apples and

other fruits; floods for wheat, tubers and apples; and cold wave for wheat), intrahousehold shocks (mostly for fruits and cereals) and asset depletion (for rice and wheat).

Regarding farmers' perceptions of the current season's performance, the worst harvest expectations were found for wheat (irrigated arid and rangeland humid alpine zones) and rice (rangeland humid cold zone). Although most reported below-normal production, expectations were better than the sixth round for all crops except pulses. Several findings suggest that poor harvest concentrated among the most isolated and least well-off farmers. First, there was a positive and significant statistical association between the shocks that affected less well-off households (intrahousehold shocks for rice, wheat, tubers and fruit) and reporting a decrease in harvest. Second, a higher proportion of farmers produced less, crops, when using self-produced seeds. Third, a more diversified cropping pattern increased the odds of decreasing harvest (not much for cereals, though). However, it was not smallholders that reported a decrease in production the most, and the indicator was associated with other shocks, such as lack of water for rice, wheat, fruit and tubers, and floods for wheat. Plant diseases and pests were also common the previous year at the same time, the former particularly for rice and apples (cited by 81 and 86 percent, respectively), the latter for rice and pulses (74 and 63 percent). Lack of water affected fruit more prominently and in the irrigated arid warm zone (Figures 4 and 5).

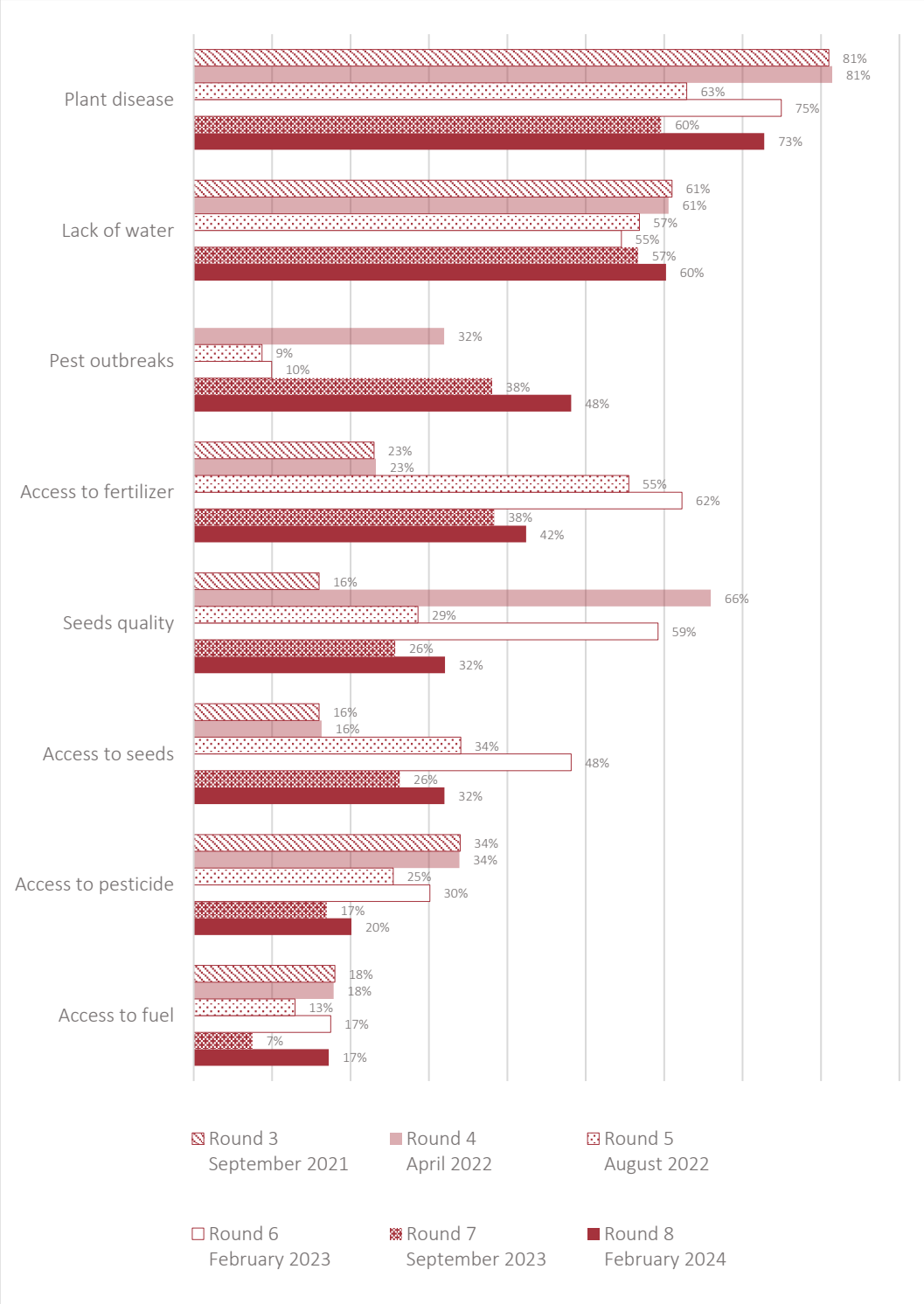
The improving trend in marketing conditions was reversed as more farmers reported difficulties selling their outputs compared to the previous round, though fewer than the same time last year. This was confirmed by the large percentage of farmers reporting a decline in selling price, especially for rice, maize, tubers (potatoes) and pulses, consistent with deflation. Difficulties selling products was particularly frequent for rice and other cereals.

Figure 4. Crop production difficulties: Plant disease (percentage of crop producers)



Source: FAO. 2024. Afghanistan: DIEM-Monitoring assessment results (February 2024). In: *FAO Data in Emergencies Hub*. Rome. [Cited 27 March 2024]. https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org

Figure 5. Crop production difficulties (percentage of crop producers)

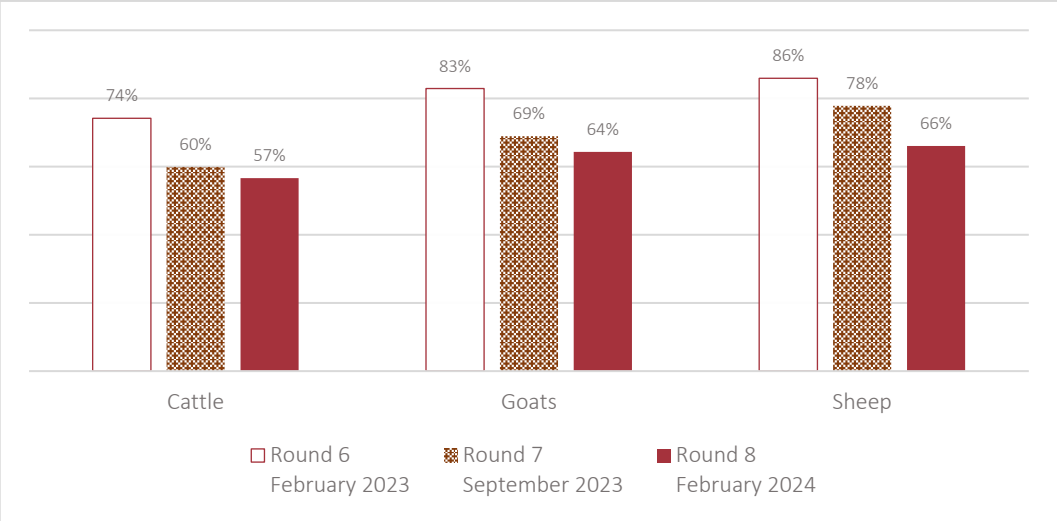


Source: FAO. 2024. Afghanistan: DIEM-Monitoring assessments results (September 2021, April and August 2022, February and September 2023, and February 2024). In: *FAO Data in Emergencies Hub*. Rome. [Cited 27 March 2024]. https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org

Livestock

Herd and flock sizes are growing, especially because of a decrease in mortality. For small ruminants, mortality and distress sales remain very frequent, although the decrease from the previous round is generalized across all species (Figure 6). The reduction of the number of animals was much more frequent among medium and large producers. Households in Badakhshan, Baghlan, Bamyan, Farah, Ghor, Herat, Laghman, Nangarhar, Paktika and Sar-e-Pul provinces more frequently reported distress sales as the main reason for changes in the number of animals. The cold wave that took place at the end of February 2024 has highly impacted livestock.

Figure 6. Percentage of livestock producers with fewer animals than 12 months ago



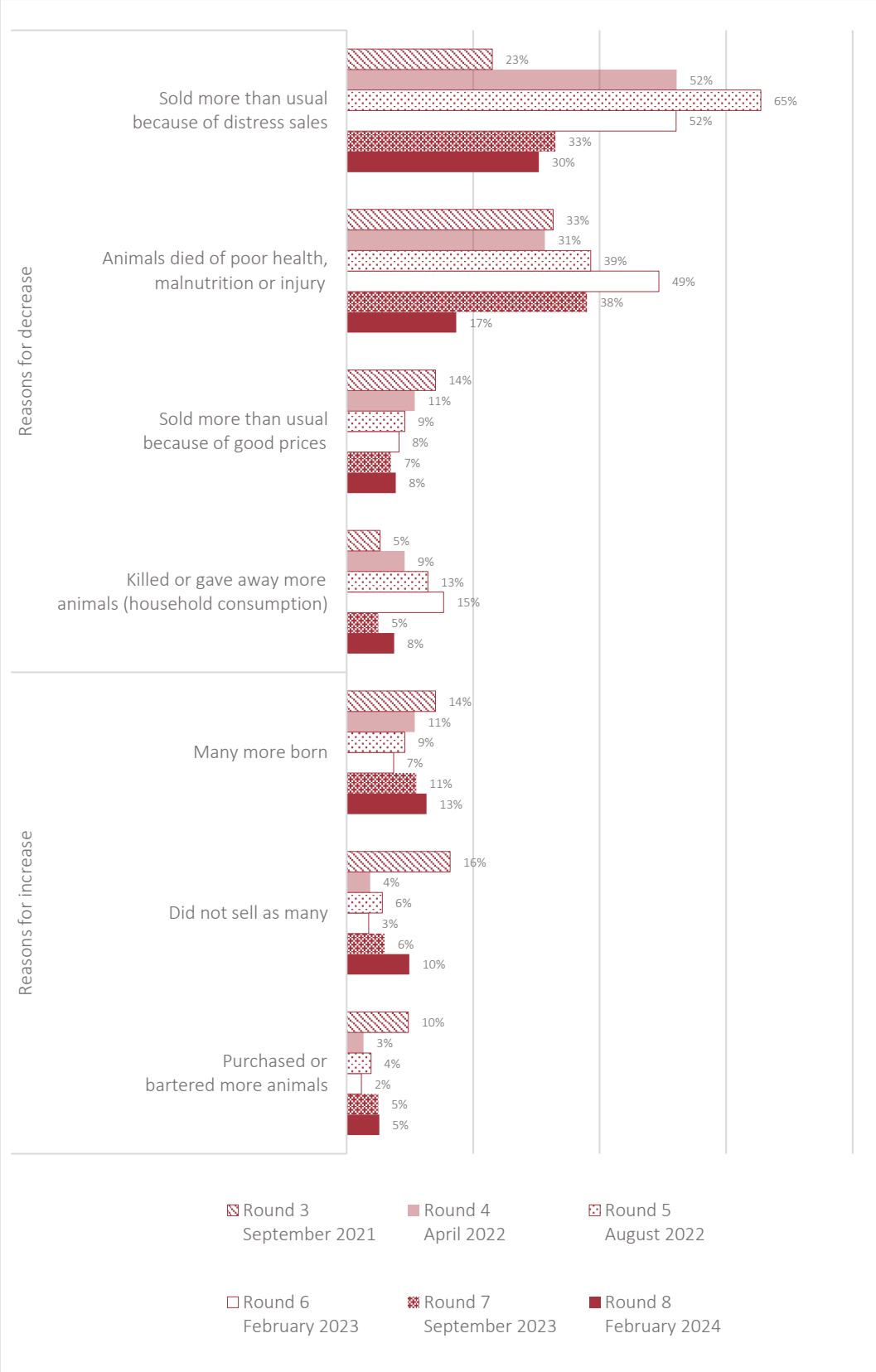
Source: FAO. 2024. Afghanistan: DIEM-Monitoring assessments results (February and September 2023, and February 2024). In: *FAO Data in Emergencies Hub*. Rome. [Cited 27 March 2024]. https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org

Seventy-five percent of cattle producers, 68 percent of goat producers and 79 percent of sheep producers reported production difficulties (Figure 8). This was about 20 percent less than the sixth round. Challenges accessing water and diseases decreased compared to previous rounds, but not for cattle. Access to veterinary services remained a frequent difficulty, especially for cattle and goat producers.

Access to pasture and water resources were crucial concerns across several provinces, indicating the vulnerability of livestock farmers to environmental pressures such as drought and resource scarcity. Poor condition of pastures was more frequent in Badakhshan, Badghis, Bamyan, Faryab, Ghazni, Ghor, Herat, Kandahar, Kunduz, Maidan Wardak, Paktika, Paktya, Samangan and Sar-e-Pul.

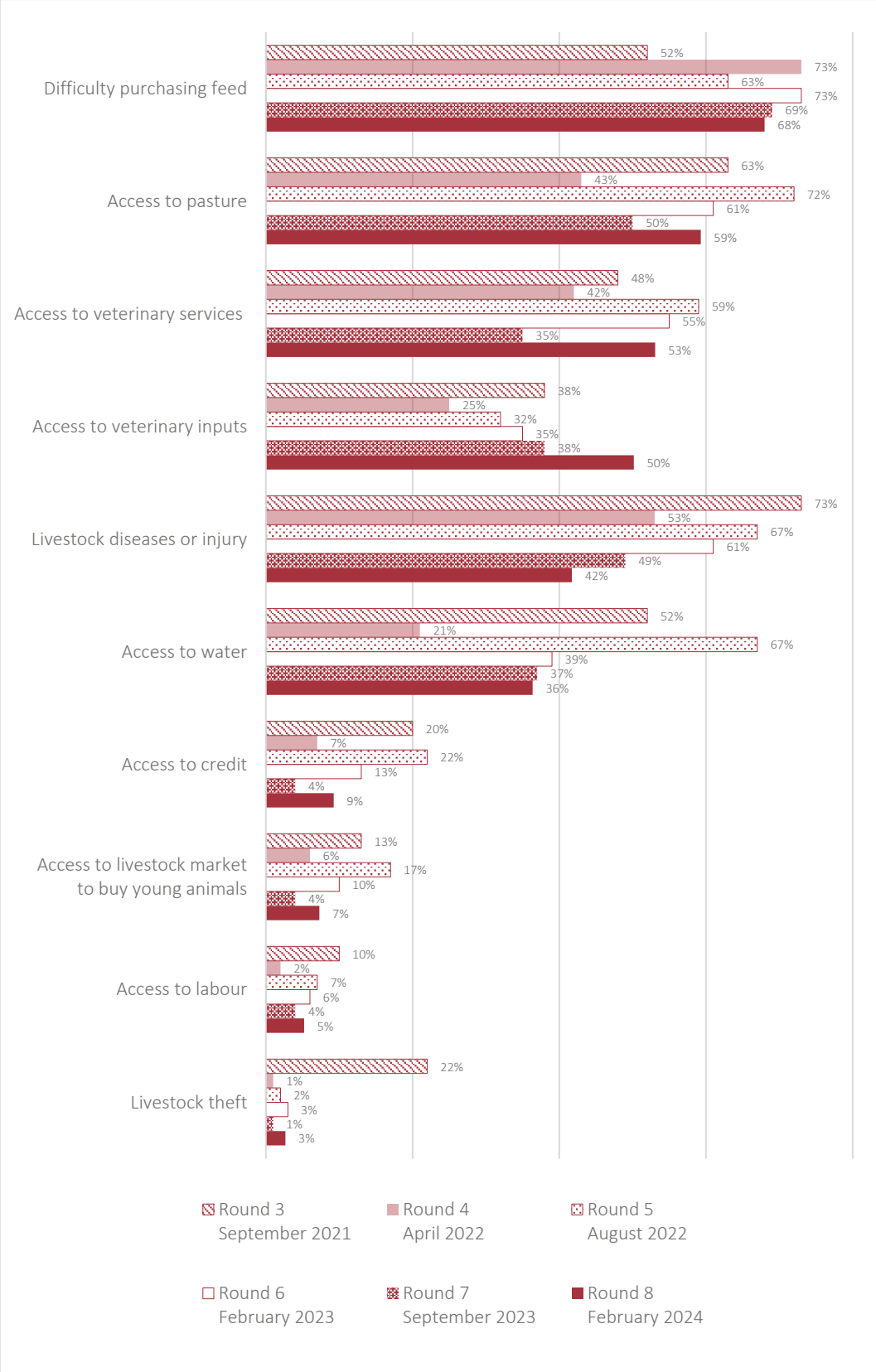
Prices of livestock products have, for most producers, decreased compared to what is typical, but the percentage of producers reporting a decrease in price is less than crop producers, and there has been an improvement compared to previous rounds. The percentage of producers reporting selling difficulties decreased from 90 percent in the sixth round, 60 percent in the seventh round, to 55 percent this round. In the current round, difficulties were still reported by 64 percent of cattle and 60 percent of sheep producers. The low prices and high transportation costs continued to be the most frequent issues, but the latter has declined in prevalence, consistent with the deflationary context.

Figure 7. Reasons for change in herd/flock size (percentage of livestock producers)



Source: FAO. 2024. Afghanistan: DIEM-Monitoring assessments results (September 2021, April and August 2022, February and September 2023, and February 2024). In: *FAO Data in Emergencies Hub*. Rome. [Cited 27 March 2024]. https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org

Figure 8. Livestock production difficulties (percentage of livestock producers)

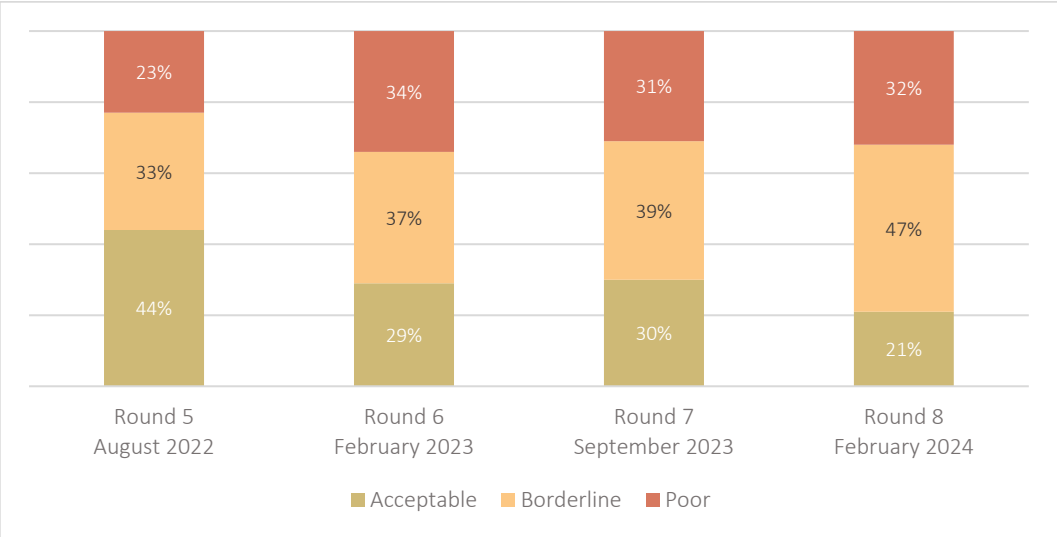


Source: FAO. 2024. Afghanistan: DIEM-Monitoring assessments results (September 2021, April and August 2022, February and September 2023, and February 2024). In: *FAO Data in Emergencies Hub*. Rome. [Cited 27 March 2024]. https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org

Food security

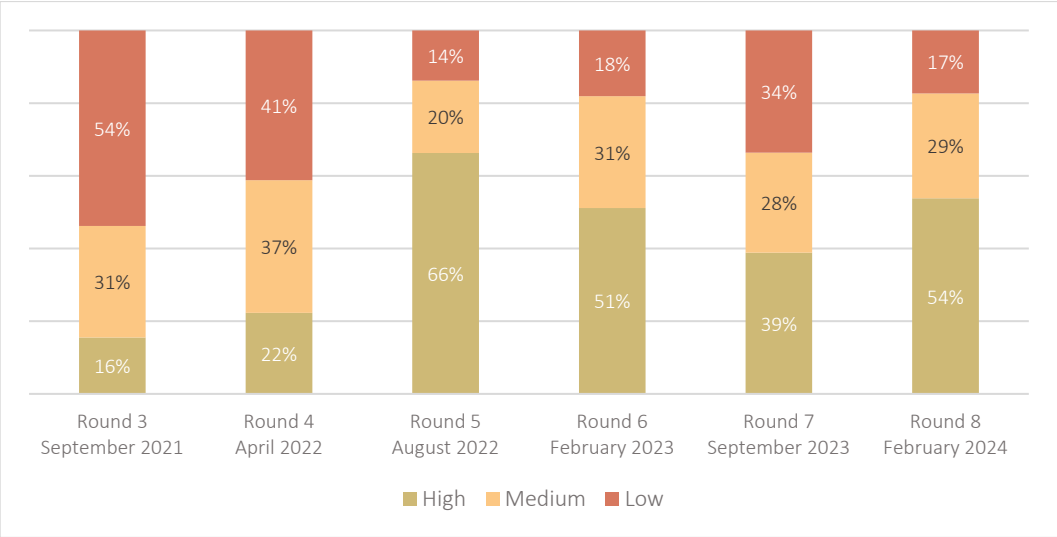
All food consumption indicators have shown an improvement, especially the most severe outcomes. Compared to the sixth round, dietary diversity (as measured with the food consumption score [Figure 9] and HDDS [Figure 10]) is similar, but the reduced coping strategy index (Figure 11) and Food Insecurity Experience Scale (Figure 12) improved which are better proxies for caloric intake.[1] The LCSI (Figure 13) has shown an improvement in the adoption of the most severe coping strategies – emergency – but not crisis. Ghor, Hilmand, Jawzjan, Khost, Kunduz, Maidan Wardak, Nimroz, Paktika and Samangan presented the worst outcomes across the indicators, except for HDDS which was not consistent with the other indicators.

Figure 9. Food consumption groups



Source: FAO. 2024. Afghanistan: DIEM-Monitoring assessments results (August 2022, February and September 2023, and February 2024). In: *FAO Data in Emergencies Hub*. Rome. [Cited 27 March 2024]. https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org

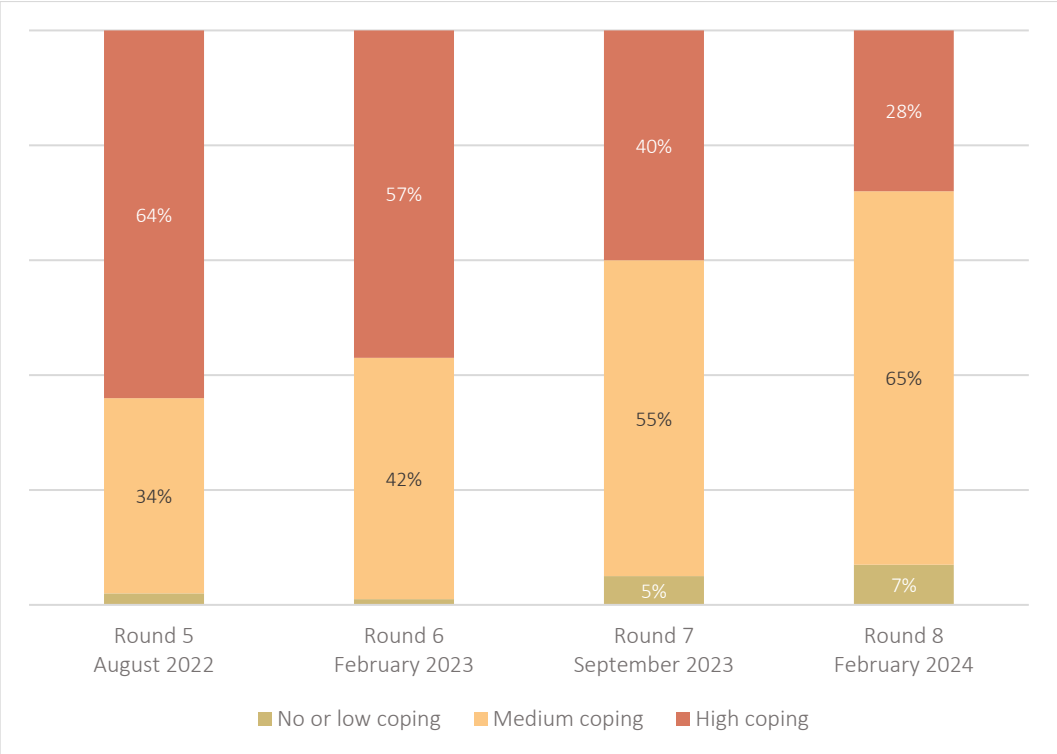
Figure 10. Household dietary diversity score (HDDS)



Source: FAO. 2024. Afghanistan: DIEM-Monitoring assessments results (September 2021, April and August 2022, February and September 2023, and February 2024). In: *FAO Data in Emergencies Hub*. Rome. [Cited 27 March 2024]. https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org

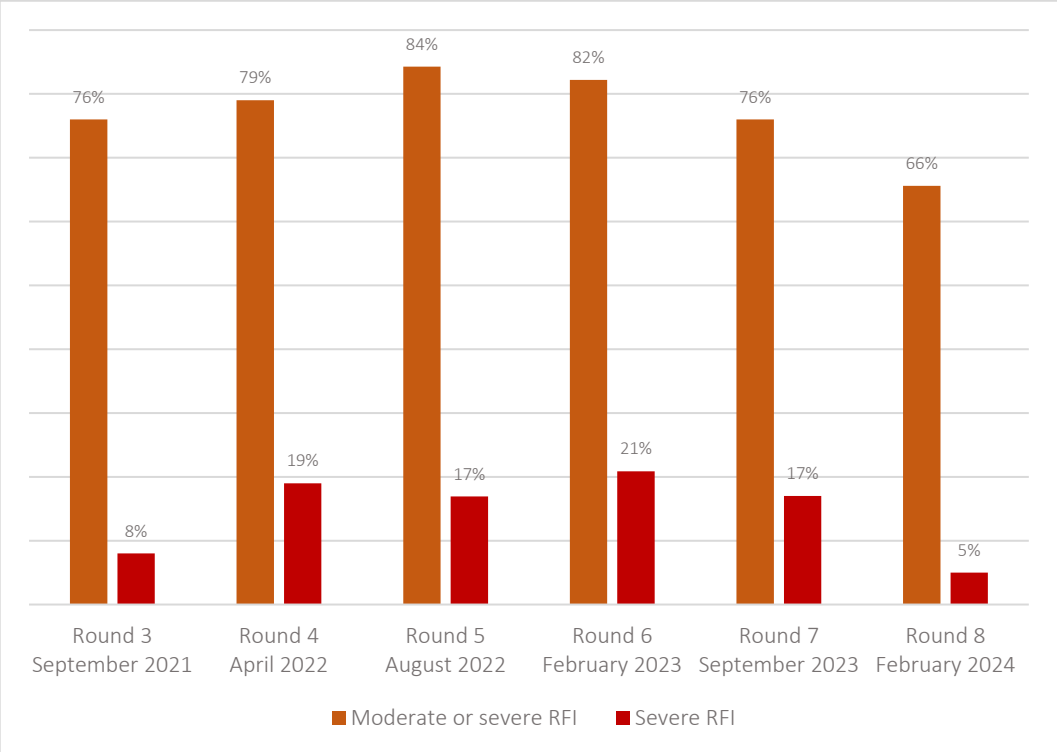
[1] FIES results are subject to change until the country scale is established for more consistent comparability across rounds.

Figure 11. Reduced coping strategy index



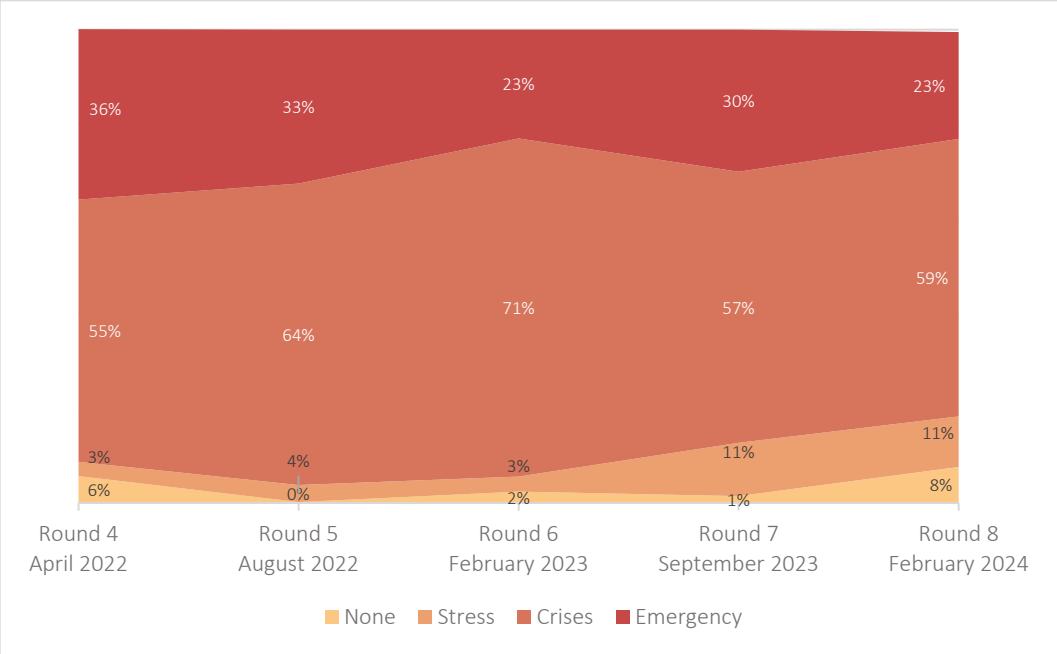
Source: FAO. 2024. Afghanistan: DIEM-Monitoring assessments results (August 2022, February and September 2023, and February 2024). In: *FAO Data in Emergencies Hub*. Rome. [Cited 27 March 2024]. https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org

Figure 12. Prevalence of recent food insecurity (RFI)



Source: FAO. 2024. Afghanistan: DIEM-Monitoring assessments results (September 2021, April and August 2022, February and September 2023, and February 2024). In: *FAO Data in Emergencies Hub*. Rome. [Cited 27 March 2024]. https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org

Figure 13. Livelihood coping strategy index (LCSI)



Source: FAO. 2024. Afghanistan: DIEM-Monitoring assessments results (April and August 2022, February and September 2023, and February 2024). In: *FAO Data in Emergencies Hub*. Rome. [Cited 27 March 2024]. https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org

Shocks had an impact on food security, but quite weakly, except for cold temperatures on severe RFI. Wealth proxies indicated more meaningful impact. Farming performances seem to have had an impact on dietary diversity indicators, not livelihood changes. Agricultural activities continue to matter as households involved in both crop and livestock production indicated better outcomes. Figure 13 shows the plotted probability of poor food consumption among farmers. It is derived from a logit model with 90 percent correct predictions and a 0.75 R squared. The figure shows how diversifying the crop pattern has a huge positive contributing role in food consumption. Secondly, the line of both crop and livestock producers is well below the one related to crop producers only, predicting less odds of poor food consumption.

Needs

The reported needs have not changed much compared to the previous rounds. The need for food assistance was reported more frequently by female-headed households and by households engaged in livestock production only. Crop inputs were requested by farmers who planted and produced less (more than 60 percent, compared to 44 percent of those who did not plant and produce less), and by larger farmers (67 percent of those with more than 2 hectares). Larger farmers were also more likely to report the need for farming infrastructure and larger livestock producers reported the need for livestock infrastructure. Households with livestock were more likely to report the need for feed (62 percent) and veterinary services (53 percent), especially small producers.

Recommendations

Short-term recommendations

- Urgently distribute seeds, fertilizer and other necessary inputs specifically tailored for summer crops to farmers in drought-affected regions (North, Central Highlands and West). This assistance will prepare farmers for the upcoming planting season, ensuring timely cultivation.
- The rehabilitation of a critical irrigation system across the country is also a priority. It is recommended to use a cash-for-work approach to rehabilitate this communal infrastructure and sustain agricultural livelihoods.
- Launch short-term pest and disease management campaigns, including awareness-raising sessions and distribution of controlling measures to prevent crop losses and safeguard agricultural productivity, particularly in Badghis, Baghlan, Balkh, Faryab, Herat, Jawzjan, Kunduz and Samangan provinces.
- Provide feed to livestock farmers in areas affected by the recent cold wave ensuring the survival of animals and preventing distress sales due to fodder scarcity. Deploy veterinary services to the livestock population affected by disease outbreaks to protect the livelihoods of livestock producers.
- Increase livelihood diversification opportunities for women in agriculture such as backyard poultry, beekeeping and vegetable gardening, providing alternative income sources and resilience against shocks, and advocating for policy interventions.
- Establish community-based farmer support groups to facilitate knowledge sharing, resource pooling and mutual assistance among farmers fostering solidarity within rural communities facing agricultural challenges.

Medium- and long-term recommendations

- Promote the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices through long-term extension services and incentives, emphasizing pest management, water efficient-irrigation techniques and soil conservation methods to improve agricultural productivity and resilience.
- Strengthen social safety nets and community-based resilience mechanisms, including expanding to social protection programmes, promoting community saving groups and enhancing community early warning systems, and providing

long-term support for vulnerable households ensuring they are better prepared for future shocks.

- Implement long-term crop diversification programmes to promote cultivation of a wider range of drought-resistance crops including pulses, legumes and climate-resistant varieties of wheat and barley to reduce dependency on water-intensive crops and enhance food security.

- Facilitate long-term market access for farmers by establishing storage facilities and market information systems to reduce post-harvest losses, enhance value chains and improve farmers' bargaining power in marketplaces.

Notes

World Bank. 2024. *Afghanistan economic monitor.* Kabul. https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/892ff644f4cc53304fa51c414ab25b1f-0310012024/original/Afghanistan-Economic-Monitor-February-2024.pdf

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.

Contact

FAO Representation in Afghanistan

FAO-AF@fao.org
www.fao.org/Afghanistan | @FAOAfghanistan
Kabul, Afghanistan

Office of Emergencies and Resilience

Data-in-emergencies@fao.org
data-in-emergencies.fao.org | @FAOEmergencies
Rome, Italy

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on the map(s) in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of FAO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers and boundaries. Dashed lines on the map represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement.

FAO. 2024. *Afghanistan: DIEM – Data in Emergencies Monitoring brief, round 8 – Results and recommendations, June 2024.* Rome.
https://doi.org/10.40601/cd0990en

Some rights reserved. This work is available under a CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO licence

© FAO, 2024
CD0990EN/1/06.24