Key points

1. Households engaged in agriculture exhibited better food security outcomes.
2. Shocks were linked to household food insecurity.
3. Increasing reliance on coping behaviours may erode household resilience.
4. Agricultural incomes are diminishing.
5. Small-scale crop and livestock producers reported declining production and multiple difficulties.
6. Vulnerable groups remain at higher risk.
7. Agricultural households require support to bolster production.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) conducted an assessment of household food security and agricultural livelihoods in December 2023. The overall aim of the assessment was to provide an overview of the food security and livelihoods situation in government-controlled areas of Ukraine in order to inform evidence-based decision making.

A total of 4,764 households were successfully interviewed by phone across all government-controlled areas of Ukraine in December 2023. The survey is representative of the population of nine front-line oblasts and three larger macroregions. The sample is representative of the total population – excluding large agricultural firms – with a 95 percent confidence level and an 8.5 percent margin of error (MOE) around the estimates. At the time of the survey, data collection was not possible in areas not under government control: Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Luhanska oblast and parts of Donetska, Khersonska and Zaporizka oblasts. Weights were applied during analysis to correct for disproportionate sampling at strata and rural population levels.

METHODOLOGY

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Note: North macroregion consists of Kyiv, Kyivska and Zhytomysrka oblasts; Centre macroregion consists of Cherkaska, Kirovohradska, Poltavska and Vinnytska oblasts; and West macroregion consists of Chernivetska, Ivano-Frankivska, Khmelnytska, Lwowska, Riwenska, Ternopilska, Volynska and Zakarpatska oblasts.
Households engaged in agriculture exhibited better food security outcomes

Across all three food security indicators analysed (Household Dietary Diversity Score, Livelihoods Coping Strategies Index, Food Insecurity Experience Scale), improved food security outcomes for households either engaged in agricultural activities and/or earning an income from agricultural production were observed.

The vast majority of households engaged in crop or livestock production used their production primarily for home consumption. Household-level agricultural activities – particularly for subsistence – can be a pathway to better food security and strengthened resilience at household level. By cultivating their own food, families can reduce their reliance on external sources, mitigate the impact of price fluctuations and ensure a consistent supply of nutritious food.

Shocks linked to household food insecurity

Households that reported experiencing at least one shock to their livelihoods in the three months preceding the survey were considerably more likely to be moderately or severely food insecure than those that did not report a shock. The mean prevalence of recent food insecurity (RFI) tended to increase with the number of shocks reported. Targeted support to households with more exposure to shocks and less resilience to respond – such as those in front-line areas, female headed households and internally displaced persons (IDP) – may improve food security outcomes.

Figure 1. Prevalence of moderate or severe recent food insecurity (percent of households +/- MOE) by household agricultural activities or incomes

Figure 2. Prevalence of moderate or severe RFI (percent of households +/- MOE) by households experiencing shocks in the three months preceding the survey, by types of shocks (left) and by number of shocks (right)

Note: * indicates statistically significant comparisons.
High levels of coping behaviours may erode household resilience

More than 70 percent of all households were engaged in coping strategies, most commonly spending savings and reducing expenditures on health. Though not directly comparable, this represents an increase in coping behaviours since the 2023 Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (REACH and WFP, 2023) where overall coping reached about 50 percent of households. This escalation in coping may be enabling households to maintain their food security in the short term, however, over time and without support, household resilience may deteriorate as coping abilities are exhausted.

Agricultural incomes are diminishing

While one in five Ukrainian households reported a decline in their main income compared to the previous year, this was much more prevalent among households whose primary income source is from agriculture. Half of those relying on agricultural production for their main income source and more than one-third relying on agricultural production or labour indicated that their income declined compared to the previous year (Figure 3).

Small-scale crop and livestock producers reported declining production and multiple difficulties

Small-scale agricultural producers in Ukraine faced multiple challenges related to access to inputs, water and feed, mine-contaminated land, and declining incomes and harvests, among others, that have affected their ability to pursue livelihoods.

About one in five crop producers reported a decrease in planted area, while two in five reported a decrease in harvest for their main crop compared to last year. Crop producers in Odeska (57 percent), Mykolaivska (45 percent) and Khersonska (45 percent) were most likely to report a decrease in harvest. Over 40 percent of livestock producers reported a decrease in the number of livestock. The average decrease was higher in front-line oblasts across all main livestock types.

Adequate assistance to agricultural livelihoods is needed to help mitigate these challenges in support of household food security and resilience.

Vulnerable groups remain at higher risk

Pockets of elevated vulnerability remain in certain groups such as IDPs, those in front-line areas and female-headed households, who demonstrated elevated levels of food insecurity and coping behaviours, have vulnerable income profiles and reported more frequent shocks. Targeted assistance to these groups is needed to strengthen resilience in the face of multiple shocks to their livelihoods.

Key needs for agricultural production support

To enhance the role of agriculture in ensuring household food security, households engaged in farming activities identified three key priorities: access to inputs for crop and vegetable production (including seeds, fertilizer and tools), financial assistance in the form of cash and resources for livestock feed.

NOTES

REQUIRED CITATION

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Kyiv, Ukraine