



Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics



The United Nations

Joint press release by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the World Food Programme (WFP)

FOOD INSECURITY IN PALESTINE REMAINS HIGH

Food insecurity in Palestine remains at very high levels, with a third of households – 33 percent or 1.6 million people – food insecure, according to the 2013 annual food security survey, a collaborative effort between the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and United Nations (UN) agencies and food security sector.

In Gaza, food insecurity levels remained at 57 percent, while in the West Bank, food insecurity remained at 19 percent – both unchanged from 2012 levels. The high food insecurity levels in 2012 and 2013 reversed the improvement that took place over the 2009-2011 period, when overall food insecurity in Palestine fell to 27 percent.

Although refugees in the West Bank experienced some improvement in their food insecurity situation (from 23 to 20 percent), rates of food insecurity remain higher for refugees than non-refugees, at 20 percent and 19 percent respectively. Food insecurity rates in West Bank refugee camps remain higher than in either urban or rural areas. Refugees in Gaza continue to report lower food insecurity rates than non-refugees (54 percent compared to 63 percent for non-refugees), likely due to the assistance provided by the UN and other entities.

Figures indicate some polarization of households' socioeconomic conditions in the past year with, on the one hand; food insecurity stagnating at high levels and, on the other hand, the food secure households increasing. Thirty five percent of households are now food secure – up from twenty four in 2012.

In Palestine, food insecurity is driven by high rates of poverty resulting from unemployment, which is in part due to ongoing Israeli access and movement restrictions, as well as high prices for food and economic shocks. Food is available in markets, but expensive, so households reduce the variety and nutritional value found in their diet. The majority of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank spend more than half their income on food.

There are a number of factors that are putting pressure on food security. In the West Bank there was a negative economic growth of 0.1 percent in the first half of 2013 comparing with the same period in 2012 at constant prices (Base year 2004), according to the PCBS data, due to a decrease in foreign aid and Israeli restrictions. Economic growth was therefore unable to contribute to a decrease in food insecurity levels in the West Bank.

The blockade on Gaza since 2007 continues to stifle the local economy and prevents any meaningful recovery of the most productive sectors. The already dire economic situation was compounded in 2013 by the curtailment of the unofficial tunnel-trade, which meant that low-cost products arriving from Egypt are being replaced by more costly products arriving via Israel. In addition, limits on importing construction

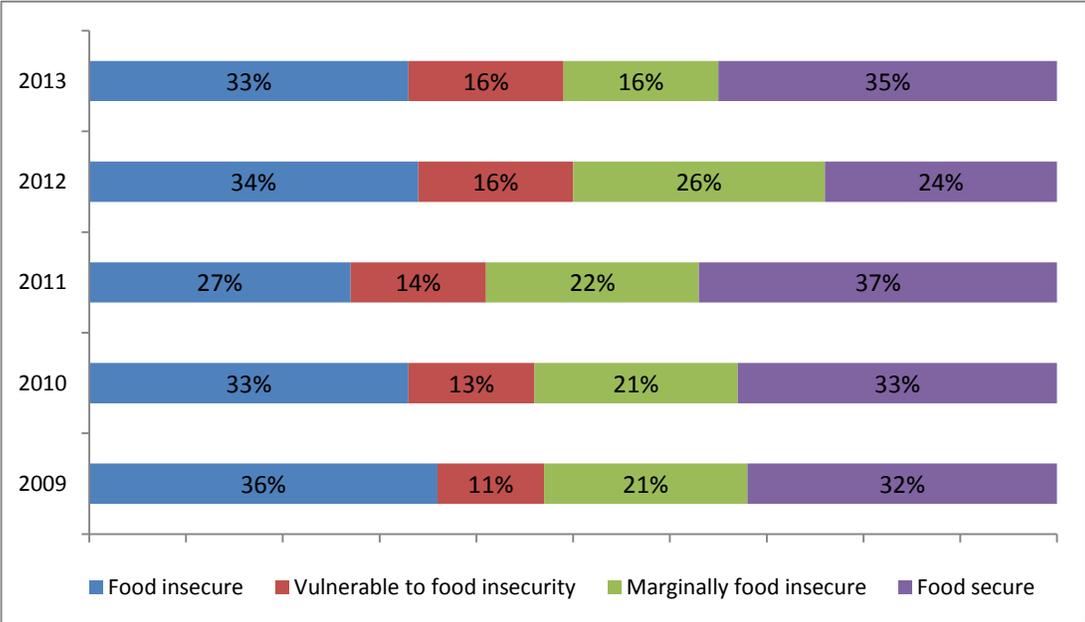
*The release of this statement was in cooperation with Food Security Sector
The results based on UN agreed food security methodology*

materials into Gaza have put pressure on employment. The unemployment rate was 40.8 percent in the first quarter 2014 which amounted to about 180,200 unemployed people– a five year peak.

The continued high rates of food insecurity in Palestine coincides with an ongoing decrease in funding for critical UN programmes such as food, agriculture and cash for work, focused on assisting those in greatest need. This has already led to a reduction of assistance and may lead to further reductions in 2014. Reductions in these vital humanitarian programmes would have a considerable impact at a time when the needs persist. *However, food insecurity in Palestine can only be sustainably improved by addressing the root causes of the crisis, such as the ongoing blockade on Gaza and access restrictions in the West Bank.*

The annual Socio-Economic and Food Security (SEFSec) report - carried out by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the World Food Programme (WFP) has been conducted each year since 2009. The 2013 data was collected early 2014. Under the leadership of the Food Security Sector, a review of the SEFSec methodology has been initiated and is currently under way – with the ultimate objective of improving the way the survey captures the various dimensions of food insecurity in Palestine (poverty, food consumption and resilience). This statement gives an overview of food security trends using the existing methodology, while a new short report incorporating the updated methodology will be released during the fall of 2014.

Household Food Security Levels in Palestine, 2009-2013



Note: Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.