# **UN Special rapporteur on the Right to Food – FSIN inputs**

## QUESTION 1

**What are the root causes of food insecurity in places where this is currently a high risk of famine like Burkina Faso, Mali, South Sudan and Sudan or places of emergency conditions of acute food security such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Pakistan, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Yemen?**

Since 2016, the Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC) has reported persistently high shares of people in in IPC/CH Phase 3 (Crises), Phase 4 (Emergency) as well as in Catastrophe (IPC/CH Phase 5) in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Haiti, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen.

The latest [Global Report published in May 2024](https://www.fsinplatform.org/report/global-report-food-crises-2024/) classified all of them as **protracted major food crises[[1]](#footnote-2)**, except for Pakistan which didn’t have data in 2016. The severe and persistent nature of food crises in these countries is caused by **interlinked and mutually reinforcing drivers** superimposed on **structural vulnerabilities**.

### GRFC primary driver analysis

The GRFC identifies the predominant driver for each country, whether conflict/insecurity, economic shocks or weather extremes. As can be seen in Table 1, these evolve and change according to domestic and/or regional conflicts, the occurrence of extreme weather events and economic shocks- whether global, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the ripple effects of the war in Ukraine, or domestic, including high levels of inflation and high food prices.

Table 1: Number of years each drivers has been identified as the primary one

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Country** | **Conflict/insecurity** | **Economic shocks** | **Weather extremes** |
| Afghanistan | 6 | 2 |  |
| Burkina Faso | 7 |  | 1 |
| Democratic Republic of the Congo | 8 |  |  |
| Ethiopia | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| Haiti | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Mali | 8 |  |  |
| Pakistan | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Somalia | 2 |  | 6 |
| South Sudan | 6 | 2 |  |
| Sudan | 3 | 4 | 1 |
| Syrian Arab Republic | 6 | 2 |  |
| Yemen | 8 |  |  |

**Conflict/insecurity** is the predominant cause of persisting high levels of acute food insecurity as well as linked to rapid deteriorations in food security, as witnessed in 2023 in the Sudan and the Gaza Strip. Whether protracted or rapidly-escalating, these conflicts disrupt livelihoods, markets and agricultural production; lead to high levels of displacement affecting the unrooted and host communities alike; and destroy infrastructure, that can lead to severe food shortages as well as reverse development gains.

* Food crises in Yemen, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali have conflict as the main driver each year from 2016 to 2023;
* Afghanistan, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic have seen conflict as the primary driver in six out of eight years;
* In Burkina Faso, conflict was the primary cause in seven out of eight years.

**Economic shocks** have increasingly contributed to food insecurity since 2019, reflecting the vulnerability of many countries to regional and global economic shocks such as from the COVID-19 pandemic and the ripple effects of the war in Ukraine. These vulnerabilities include high import dependence.

* Sudan had economic shocks as the primary driver for four years, and Haiti in three;
* Afghanistan, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic have seen a rise in the impact of economic shocks in recent years (2022 and 2023), indicating that economic instability is becoming as important a driver as conflict.

**Weather extremes** have been a significant driver of food insecurity, with climate-related disasters that significantly impact productivity and food availability on the rise.

* Ethiopia and Somalia have faced food crises primarily due to prolonged droughts in six out of eight years.
* Pakistan has experienced frequent weather shocks, including flooding and drought, as a major cause in five years, highlighting the country's vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters.
* Haiti, with weather extremes and natural hazards as the primary driver for three years, is closely linked to hurricanes and earthquakes.

Conflict/insecurity remains the predominant driver of acute food insecurity and is on the rise. Global-scale economic shocks and weather extremes have increased, reflecting the impacts of climate change and economic volatility caused by global shocks linked to the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

Figure 1: Primary driver between 2016-2023, for selected countries

### Structural vulnerabilities

Structural vulnerabilities underlie most food crises.

Structural vulnerabilities indicators (from GRFC 2024)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **% cereal import dependency weighted by caloric relevance** | **Share of agricultural, forestry and fishery employment (%)** | **% of crop growing period affected by drought condition** | **% of pasture growing period affected by drought condition** | **INFORM RISK (0-10)** | **HDI ranking (global)** |
| Afghanistan | 41.6 | 46 | 19.5 | N/A | 8.1 | 180 |
| Burkina Faso | 15.8 | 15.8 | 15.8 | 17.1 | 7 | 184 |
| Democratic Republic of the Congo | N/A | 55.3 | 1.6 | N/A | 7.7 | 179 |
| Ethiopia | 7.5 | 63.7 | 14.6 | 19.6 | 7 | 175 |
| Haiti | 60.2 | 45.6 |  |  | 7.2 | 163 |
| Mali | 10.5 | 10.5 | 10.5 | 15.0 | 6.8 | 186 |
| Pakistan | -18.6 | 37.5 | 21 | N/A | 6.1 | 161 |
| Somalia | N/A | 26.3 | 21.1 | 16.1 | 8.5 | N/A |
| South Sudan | N/A | 62.1 | 13.5 | 18.1 | 8.5 | 191 |
| Sudan | 23.6 | 40.6 | 18.6 | 18.6 | 7.3 | 172 |
| Syrian Arab Republic | 29.2 | 12.5 | 13.5 | N/A | 7.2 | 150 |
| Yemen | 96 | 28.1 | 14.8 | N/A | 7.5 | 183 |

#### **Cereal import dependency**

Afghanistan, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen, Ethiopia, Haiti, and Mali show high dependency on cereal imports, sometimes exceeding 25%. Notably, Yemen has an exceptionally high dependency at 96%, while Haiti also shows a high dependency at 60.2%. This dependency makes them vulnerable to global market fluctuations and trade disruptions, as well as currency depreciation, which can lead to food shortages and price spikes, affecting the affordability and availability of food.

#### **High dependence on agriculture**

Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and South Sudan have a significant portion of their population employed in agriculture, forestry and fishery, with figures often exceeding 45%. Ethiopia shows a high share of agricultural employment at 63.7%. Own food production is therefore key for the food security and livelihoods of vulnerable populations in these countries, making them particularly vulnerable to climatic and economic disruptions.

#### **Drought conditions**

In Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen between 15% to 20% of the crop and pasture-growing period are affected by drought – meaning around one season in every five, over the period 2003-2023. Notably, Somalia has 21.1% of the crop-growing period and 16.1% of the pasture-growing period affected by drought. This significantly reduces agricultural productivity, leading to food shortages and increased vulnerability.

#### **High INFORM RISK Scores**

Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen have high [INFORM RISK](https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk) scores, indicating the countries’ lack of capacity to respond to disasters based on hazard exposure, socioeconomic vulnerability and institutional coping capacity.

#### **Low Human Development Index (HDI) Rankings**

Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen generally have very low [HDI](https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index) rankings, a reflection of the compounding effects of poor health resources, limited education opportunities and low incomes in these countries.

1. A country/territory is defined as a protracted major food crisis when it is included in all editions of the GRFC and consistently identified as a major food crisis. For more information on how the GRFC defines a (protracted) food crisis and a (protracted) major food crisis, please consult the [GRFC 2024 technical notes](https://www.fsinplatform.org/sites/default/files/resources/files/GRFC2024-tech-notes.pdf). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)