

Despite some improvements, food security remains dire in Syria – UN agencies

18 July 2017 – In spite of improvements in wheat production in war-torn Syria – about 12 per cent more than last year’s record low – the overall food security situation remains far worse than before the conflict, the United Nations food security and emergency food relief agencies have said.

According to UN Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)) and the World Food Programme ([WFP](#)), total wheat production estimates for 2017 stand at 1.8 million tonnes, in part due to an improved security situation. The estimate is, however, less than half of the pre-conflict ten-year average.

“The small improvement in the availability of food for Syrians is promising, but the needs remain high and more must be done to provide food for families affected by the crisis,” said Jakob Kern, WFP Country Director in Syria, said in a joint news release from the two UN agencies.

“With the evolving security situation, more farmers are expected to have access to cultivate their land again. Now is the time to step up our support, as agriculture is more important than ever for the livelihoods of many,” added Adam Yao, Acting FAO Representative in the country.

The improvements are also in part due to better rains which have increased water flows and water levels in many reservoirs, benefiting crops like wheat and barley, however high cost or unavailability of inputs, such as seeds and fertilizer, and the destruction of irrigation and storage infrastructure have added to the already complicated challenges before food growers.

Furthermore, opening of some supply routes have allowed trade to slowly recover but in many parts such as in eastern Aleppo, where the entire infrastructure and markets were devastated, the recovery has been at a very slow pace.

In the news release, the two UN agencies also noted that humanitarian access to some besieged areas has improved compared to last year but access to some places such as Deir-ez-Zor and Raqqa remain severely constrained.

Across the country, food prices continue to remain at record highs and an estimated 6.9 million Syrians are still food insecure and an additional 5.6 million people are likely to become food insecure without the regular food assistance they receive every month, they added.

The information provided by the UN agencies was gathered during their latest [Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission \(CFSAM\)](#), which visited Syria in May, this year. This is the fourth food security mission to the country since the onset of the crisis and each mission provides an impartial and balanced

assessment of the agricultural and food security situation.

As ‘drivers’ of innovation, youth need skills and capacity – UN General Assembly President

17 July 2017 – Underscoring the importance of well trained and capable youth to realize the opportunities offered by advances in technology and innovation, the President of the United Nations General Assembly today called for building their capacities to ensure that they can fulfil their potential as well as support sustainable development.

“As the main beneficiaries of the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), and as the drivers of innovation and change, it is vital that the enthusiasm and ingenuity of youth are harnessed to transform the world for the better,” Peter Thomson said at an event held at UN Headquarters in New York on the theme *Skills for the future of work*.

“Just as youth need education and training to access decent jobs in and of the future, they also require skills development to fulfil their vital role in SDG implementation,” he added.

In his remarks, Mr. Thomson called for targeted policies and resources to develop the digital skills of today’s youth, as well as for specific programmes to ensure that women and girls have access to education, health and employment opportunities.

Doing so, he said, would make sure they secure decent jobs and are never left behind again.

“We must see investing in quality education and training as fundamental for a world of sustaining peace and sustainable development,” he noted.

In particular, Mr. Thomson highlighted the need to work cooperatively with all stakeholders in building the education and training systems that are responsive to the needs, and given the complexities involved, called for international cooperation, strategic partnerships, and transfer of technology.

“The multilateral system has a responsibility to bring together governments, youth, employers, educators, and innovators to demystify the labour markets of the future, and to find innovative ways of building digital skills across the world, all in support of the implementation of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development,” he stressed.



Peter Thomson, President of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly, makes remarks during the opening of the Ministerial segment of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Photo: UN Photo/Manuel Elias

Speaking alongside Mr. Thomson, Jayathma Wickramanayake, the UN Envoy on Youth, also called for greater and more coherent efforts to better forecast the skills that will be needed in the future.

“We must adapt existing policies and initiatives to be fit for the digital era and ensure that we remain flexible enough, to adapt these further in the future,” she said, citing the example of the technological advances made since the turn of the millennium and signs that this will not slow down in the years ahead.

“We must [also] ensure that national youth policies are integrated, holistic and funded,” she added.

In her remarks, the Youth Envoy also underscored the need for holistic education to address evolving technical skills as well as impart competencies required to adapt to changing and demanding workplaces.

In this regard, she highlighted that formal education alone would not be enough, and stressed the importance of non-formal and informal education.

“With all this talk of change in such little time, one truth remains: there is no better investment a country can make than in the capacities and potential of its young people,” she stated.

[Global problems need global solutions, UN officials tell ministers at development forum](#)

17 July 2017 – Opening the high-level segment of the annual forum designed to discuss implementation of the anti-poverty agenda, top United Nations officials today stressed the importance of multilateralism to address global problems.

“Solidarity and working together is more important than ever,” Frederick Musiwa Makamure Shava, the President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), told the opening of the high-level segment of the Council’s 2017 session, which coincides with the three-day ministerial meeting of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).

He noted that more than 767 million people lived in extreme poverty, according to 2013 figures cited by the UN. In addition, inequalities remain deep, conflicts and terrorism threaten humanity, and global temperatures are on the rise.

“Multilateralism is based on the recognition that we cannot overcome these – and other – global challenges in isolation,” Mr. Shava underscored. “Collective support for the poor and most vulnerable is in the interest of all of us.”

Also speaking at the opening, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres noted the interlinkages between sustainable and inclusive development, conflict prevention and natural disaster preparedness.

One of the main stressors on the world, he said, is climate change, impacting global megatrends – such as population growth, climate change, food insecurity, water scarcity, and chaotic urbanization in certain parts of the world.

He urged the more than 70 ministers and other senior government officials participating in the Forum to recommit to the [Paris Agreement](#) and its implementation: “This is something that I believe is very important [not only because of its absolute need for mankind and the future](#) of the planet but because it is also the right and smart thing to do.”

In his speech, Mr. Guterres also urged developed countries to abide by their commitments in relation to official development aid, while at the same time noting that this is not enough to fund the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)).

“We need to create conditions to help States be able to mobilise more their own resources,” he said, citing the need for tax reforms and fighting money laundering and the illicit flows of capital.

This year’s meeting, the second since the adoption of the new development agenda in 2015, is on the theme of ‘Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world.’