

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOTS Cambodia



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Cambodia's Pursuit of Food Self-Sufficiency

After overcoming the dark years that left Cambodia's physical, economic, and social structures in ruins, the country finally emerged as a strong middle-income economy in Southeast Asia, growing by 7.0% in 2014. In the social development aspect, the country is one of only 63 countries in the world to have achieved the MDG hunger target of halving the proportion of chronic undernourishment by 2015.

Central to this positive development is the growth of the agriculture sector. With **70% of the population depending on agriculture**, the Royal Government of Cambodia exerted efforts to hone the sector's potential, eventually enabling the country to achieve full rice-self sufficiency and catapulting it into a leading rice exporter in the region. The country's rice surplus is estimated to reach more than 3 million metric tons of milled rice, and the Government continues to actively pursue investments that could further boost agriculture productivity and increase the sector's competitiveness.

Food Insecurity in Cambodia

But success does not come easy. Economic prosperity does not automatically translate to prosperity for all. **One-fourth of Cambodians are still food deprived**, and eat less than the minimum daily requirement of calories. About 30% of Cambodian children are still underweight, while almost half (40.9%) are stunted. **Access to adequate amounts of nutritious food continues to be the main challenge**, with estimates showing that an average unskilled worker living in rural areas could purchase only 12.2 kg of rice/day, while those in urban areas are able to purchase only 11.7 kg/day. This hinted a **sharp decrease in the food purchasing power** of regular Cambodian workers, especially those living in the cities.




Children vulnerable to food insecurity

PILLARS OF FOOD SECURITY

Food security is "[when] people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Household food security is the application of this concept to the family level, with individuals within households as the focus of concern."

Source: Food and Agriculture Organization

 <p>AVAILABILITY</p> <p>sufficient quantities of food available on a consistent basis</p>	<p>UTILIZATION</p>  <p>appropriate use based on knowledge of basic nutrition and care, as well as adequate water and sanitation</p>
 <p>ACCESS</p> <p>having sufficient resources to obtain appropriate food for nutritious diet</p>	<p>STABILITY</p>  <p>access to adequate food at all times with no risk losing access as a consequence of sudden or cyclical events</p>

Escalating food prices and decreasing wages of unskilled workers are viewed as the main culprits **limiting food access**, especially of the poor. Cambodia's food price index is relatively higher than its neighboring countries in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS)¹, while wages for unskilled labor have been rapidly decreasing. The interplay of these two factors, among others, have led to restrictive food prices that limit food access of households with unskilled labor.

While **food availability** has significantly improved in the past decade and rice sufficiency has been met, crop variety has to be further diversified to avoid over-reliance on rice. The agriculture sector is also affected by low levels of productivity, with farmers relying mainly on rainwater for irrigation, thus making them more prone to flooding and droughts. And, while some infrastructure such as roads has improved, others such as storage facilities remain inadequate, resulting to high post-harvest losses.

The population relies heavily on aquatic and agricultural resources which have been abused by illegal logging and overfishing, threatening the future availability of these resources. Cambodia also remains **vulnerable to exogenous shocks and natural disasters that threaten the sustainability of agriculture**. **Current farming practices do not help ensure stability** and sustainability amidst sudden or cyclical events. As it stands, food stability measures already signal instability, with food price volatility increasing from 13.5 in 2010 to 14.7 in 2014.

INDICATORS

Availability

- Number of undernourished people: 2.4M (2012-2014)
- Average value of food production per person: \$270 (2013)

Access

- Prevalence of food inadequacy: 25% (2014)
- Road density (per 100 sqm of land area): 21.9 (2009)

Utilization

- Percentage of children under 5 years of age who are stunted: 41% (2010)
- Percentage of children under 5 years of age who are underweight: 29% (2012)

Stability

- Percentage of arable land equipped for irrigation: 8.8 (2010-2012)
- Per capita food supply variability: 22 (2011)

¹ Composed of Cambodia, People's Republic of China, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam

Prioritizing Food Security

In response to the food security threats, and in recognition of the pivotal role of agriculture in economic development, Cambodia recently passed the **National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition 2014-2018** which emphasizes the need for an **integrated approach involving agriculture, forestry and fisheries, water resources, health, education, and social protection units**. On the operational level, the Royal Government of Cambodia created the Council for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD), a high-level policymaking body responsible for the government's agricultural and rural road map, and for coordinating nutrition-related efforts among line ministries and development partners.

Collaborative Approaches Toward Food Security

An example of a collaborative initiative is the Zero Hunger Challenge aimed at developing the National Action Plan to create an institutional platform for designing, implementing, and coordinating food security and nutrition policy measures. The Royal Government of Cambodia, UNICEF, FAO, and WFP are working together on this initiative.

To help translate policy objectives into actual outputs, the Government and its development partners have undertaken numerous initiatives that cut across the four themes of food security. Projects that aim to **increase food availability include infrastructure development (i.e., irrigation facilities) and capacity development to increase productivity and diversify crops**. Access is enhanced by targeted programs such as the **provision of nutritious food to mothers and children**. In times of **food crises, targeted programs** ensure that those at risk, especially women and children, are provided food.

Most projects address the need to increase farmers' productivity by promoting crop diversification and increasing farmers' incomes. They encompass sustainable agriculture and resource management, and climate-smart agriculture. The USAID's Feed the Future program is an example of one such project which helped develop agricultural solutions to a variety of challenges, including poor agricultural productivity, postharvest losses, food safety, lack of market access, environmental degradation, and the effects of climate change.

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US Government's Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative Cambodia Feed the Future Program in Numbers		
11.6 PERCENT Percentage of people living in poverty in Feed the Future target region	\$7.6 MILLION Value of Feed the Future farmer sales in FY13	12.5 THOUSAND Hectares tended with improved technologies or management practices in FY13
32 THOUSAND FARMERS Producers using new technology and skills with Feed the Future's help in FY13	6 THOUSAND Children under 5 reached with nutrition help in FY13	\$664 THOUSAND New private investment leveraged by Feed the Future in FY13

Source: <http://www.feedthefuture.gov/country/cambodia>

Future Directions

In terms of **food availability**, the reliance on rain for irrigation and the lack of storage facilities stifle the productivity of Cambodia's agricultural sector. The **use of irrigation systems, more efficient technologies and farming practices can help boost agricultural productivity**. The **construction of post-harvest infrastructure** such as storage facilities will help reduce losses, while increasing transport infrastructure could help grow agricultural trade opportunities. Farmers and farming households stand to benefit from capacity building on more efficient farming methodologies to increase yield, post-harvest skills to reduce losses, and crop diversification to lessen reliance on a single crop.

To address **food access** concerns, improving farm productivity and ensuring a steady supply of food products help control food prices by minimizing market-driven price fluctuations. Interventions that **help increase the income of farmers and unskilled labor** could help **boost food purchasing power**, while expanding the road and rail networks could facilitate the movement of people and improve their access to markets and goods.

For the sake of **sustainability**, the **promotion of sustainable and climate-smart agriculture and natural resource management will contribute to the long-term availability of food**, even amidst shocks and cyclical events that often affect the country. Irrigation systems play an important role in minimizing flooding and drought. **Capacity development** on the importance of sustainable farming practices and resource management will prove critical in ensuring a steady supply of food despite the threat of climate change. **Climate-resilient infrastructure** will also be essential in controlling damage and losses brought on by natural disasters, and in ensuring a steady supply of food for the population.

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AGRICULTURE SECTOR STATISTICS



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