

Marissa Polites, PA School for Excellence in the Ag Sciences,
Elizabethtown Area High School, Elizabethtown, PA
Yemen, Factor 1: Good Governance

Food Insecurity in Yemen

As one of the larger sovereign states on the Arabian peninsula, Yemen occupies 214,00 square miles and is known for its natural beauty as well as its magnificent structure and architecture. Yemen also occupies a large coastline with over 200 islands run under this country. This area is home to approximately 29.1 million citizens, a small portion of those living in the capital city of Sanaa. Yemen is classified as a tropical desert with year-round temperatures averaging 85 degrees Fahrenheit, with summer temperatures capable of reaching 129 degrees Fahrenheit with humidity. Recently, climates in different areas of the country have dropped to those in the 70-80 degrees Fahrenheit range. Even though annual average temperatures have started to drop, precipitation has stayed at less than half an inch per month, leaving most of the region in hot, dry weather. Through all this, Yemen sees lots of tourism due to being in the middle of the Middle Eastern trade routes.

Yemeni households typically consist of about 6-7 people. Almost half of the population, approximately 44%, are children under the age of 15. Compared to other countries around the world, the cost of living in Yemen is quite low, but this doesn't make it any easier to have basic necessities. Only about 60% of all Yemeni households have access to safe water systems, with fewer having dedicated restroom areas. People that live in rural areas have significantly less access to things like education, transportation, and electricity, compared to those in urban areas. Almost half of the women living in Yemen have had no education whatsoever, with only a small percentage receiving basic education. Health care is also a very scarce thing to come across here, as other than in main cities and towns, medical care is very poor. Many diseases including polio, malaria, and dengue fever are very common because of this. Diets may also fluctuate for people living here. Though the cost of groceries is much lower in comparison to other countries, the ability to get these foods is much harder, yet approximately half of the population is at the recommended weight, with the other half being either obese or thin.

Due to most of the population being farmers, Yemen produces a wide variety of crops. Yemen has some of the most fertile lands in the Middle East, yet it isn't able to be used to its full soil potential. This also comes from the different types of terrain found in this country. There are three main types of crop-growing terrain, which include: the coastal plains, the middle highlands, and the mountainous interior. This land contains no perennial lakes or rivers, only small streams that exist during the colder seasons. Yemen is mostly known for growing khat and coffee, which had been in the spotlight for the coffee trade, starting in the 16th century. Most farmers in Yemen typically raise regular livestock, like cattle, poultry, sheep, and goats. Western countries have given Yemen agriculture aid, by introducing programs that gave the country new varieties of cattle to use for their own, yet Yemeni people still mostly rely on imported products for consumption. Among the animal aspects of Yemeni agriculture, this area is home to a diverse amount of species, most belonging to the bird and insect groups. However, the waters surrounding Yemen's land hold a plentiful amount of marine life, allowing for this country to have a more diverse agricultural trade.

With most people without reliable transportation, this makes it very difficult for the average Yemeni household to acquire necessary products safely and easily. The general functioning of food supplies is consistently poor, so Yemeni citizens have needed to learn to adapt to this ongoing crisis. Along with the food market being unstable, employment in Yemen can be difficult as well. More than half of the Yemeni workforce is engaged in agriculture, including children under 15 being used for labor, which is common. Even with this, the unemployment rate in Yemen is consistently over 30%. Introducing

the fact that quality education is a very rare privilege, and almost all women in the country aren't in the workforce, adds more of a burden onto others in the households to sustain their lifestyle. The ever-changing climate also adds a barrier to food production in Yemen. Though this has allowed for inhabitants to create new ways of water conservation and adaptable plant and animal species, this makes for an unpredictable future in agriculture for Yemen.

One of the greatest factors causing Yemen's food insecurity is undoubtedly its economic crisis, caused by the inefficient government. Yemen currently has no functioning central government that has full control over the territory. Most state institutions that are continuously operating are controlled by armed groups or unelected officials. Yemen is divided into two main administrative positions: Governorates and Districts. Governorates make up the highest administrative positions in Yemen. There are currently 22 of these governorates, including the capital city. The 22 governorates are then divided into 333 districts, which are made up of 2,210 sub districts, and those are subdivided into 38,284 villages. From the many subdivisions of the government, this allows for a lot of disconnect between officials. Even before the outbreak of the civil war in 2015, the government had faced a network of corruption, and any formal anticorruption plans were ineffective. Current government officials have been accused of rigging the educational system to be in favor of their political beliefs. This can be extremely dangerous for the youth of Yemen, because they will not be able to grow up with the freedom of expression, which can make it difficult for people to receive information on how to fight their current crisis. "Outspoken academics face a heightened risk of physical violence from the Houthis as well as other armed groups and pro government forces, and some scholars have been killed by unidentified assailants in recent years." Yemen is currently ranked as a "Level 4: Do Not Travel country, due to terrorism, civil unrest, health risks, kidnapping, armed conflict, and landmines." This makes it extremely difficult for any international programs to bring aid to citizens. With the government unable to get a grasp of its country, corrupt groups on both sides of the war have left millions of people living in famine. Food aids are often being stolen and illegally sold, making it even harder for the people that need aid to get it. This obstruction has also made it more difficult for international efforts to treat COVID-19, because of these aids being taken to different areas than intended. The economy relies on foreign aid and its main agriculture exports, yet they are unable to mass-produce these supplies, leading to famine. Naval blockades caused by the civil war have also been a huge cause of the food shortage in Yemen. Today, 17.4 million Yemenis are food insecure, and this number is expected to double by December 2022.

Yemen's current food insecurity status is undoubtedly one of the worst that the world has ever seen. There are many options for people that are wanting to help support Yemen. The easiest way for people to get involved is to research organizations invested in fighting food insecurity. These organizations are committed to giving families sustainable, basic necessities. Just spreading information about the ongoing Yemen crisis brings more awareness to the subject than most may believe. If possible, donate money to secure organizations and programs that are determined to fight food insecurity. Families in Yemen can help better their chances by using programs that they can receive aid from, and can learn to adjust how they use money and food. Another way to help Yemen would be to reopen the U.S.'s operations that were used to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens in Yemen. This could be expanded to help anyone in Yemen, regardless of U.S. citizenship. Allowing trained individuals to give the people ways to conserve what they have, and help them get to safe places in order to rebuild their society. Currently, the World Food Programme is responding to this emergency by "aiming to provide nearly 13 million people with emergency food assistance as in-kind rations of flour, pulses, oil, sugar, salt, or voucher or cash to purchase the same quantity of food" in 2022. Though this is an amazing opportunity for many people to step up, in order to ensure that food assistance is granted to these people, the WFP needs \$1.97 billion USD in order to properly fund this aid. By spreading awareness and donating any amount plausible from stable citizens in other countries, Yemen could see much needed food assistance in the following months and years. People can help become a part of the solution by just spreading awareness, even if they cannot donate. Education can be a great way to help these people in

need. By contributing to organizations that are working towards a solution, taking time out of someone's day to tell people about the problems Yemen's citizens are facing, this will help connect everyone on the same page: everyone has a moral right to food. While Yemen's people have already found incredible ways of conserving water and adapting their crops, modern ways of conservation in the agricultural world would undoubtedly benefit these people. They could use funding from supporting organizations to become more technologically advanced, which would bring a more industrialized agricultural movement to the country.

With all things considered, Yemen is certainly one of the most food-insecure countries in the world. It is also apparent that the leading factor in this is the constant economical and political crisis that has doomed Yemen's citizens. Research has identified how the struggling government and lack of basic necessities for all of Yemen's people has caused a tremendous uproar in the detrimental state of this country. Though they have one of the most diverse agricultural markets in Western Asia, this does not make up for the political and economical issues that have fated Yemen into destructive food insecurity. With escalating conflicts in Yemen, it is important for us to support Yemeni citizens by sharing information about the current state of their country, while also supporting the organizations that are dedicated to revive Yemen's agricultural market, and aid the struggling families throughout the poor Arabian country.

Works Cited

McManus, S. (n.d.). Yemen, all areas - cost of living. Retrieved from https://www.xpatulator.com/cost-of-living-review/Yemen-All-Areas_993.cfm

Sampaolo, M. (1999). Yemen - daily life and social customs. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/place/Yemen/Daily-life-and-social-customs>

MoHP. (2013). Yemen 2013 national health and demographic survey key findings. Retrieved from <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/SR220/SR220English.pdf#:~:text=Yemeni%20households%20consist%20of%20an%20average%20of%206.7,access%20to%20an%20improved%20source%20of%20drinking%20water>

Brennan, K. (2018). Farming in Yemen. Retrieved from <https://borgenproject.org/tag/farming-in-yemen/>

Torbay, R. (n.d.) Crisis in Yemen: how to help. Retrieved from <https://www.projecthope.org/crisis-in-yemen/09/2019/>

AAH. (2021). Yemen | hunger relief in the middle east. Retrieved from https://www.actionagainsthunger.org/countries/middle-east/yemen?msclkid=9a4b221e826b1db1309640bd7f102191&utm_source=bing&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=Country-Specific&utm_term=how%20to%20help%20yemen%20food%20crisis&utm_content=Yemen

WA. (2021). Yemen Maps & Facts. Retrieved from <https://www.worldatlas.com/maps/yemen#keyFactsSection>

USDoS. (2022). Yemen Travel Advisory. Retrieved from <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/yemen-travel-advisory.html#:~:text=Yemen%20%2D%20Level%204%3A%20Do%20Not%20Travel&text=Do%20not%20travel%20to%20Yemen.%2C%20armed%20conflict%2C%20and%20landmines.>

FH. (2022). Yemen: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report | Freedom House. Retrieved from <https://freedomhouse.org/country/yemen/freedom-world/2022>

WFP. (2022). Yemen Emergency | World Food Programme. Retrieved from <https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/yemen-emergency>