

# Nepal

## mVAM Food Security Monitoring Survey



Food consumption levels held steady compared to Q3 2018, but were elevated compared to the same time last year overall.



Two thirds of households depend on cereal-based production as their main livelihood.



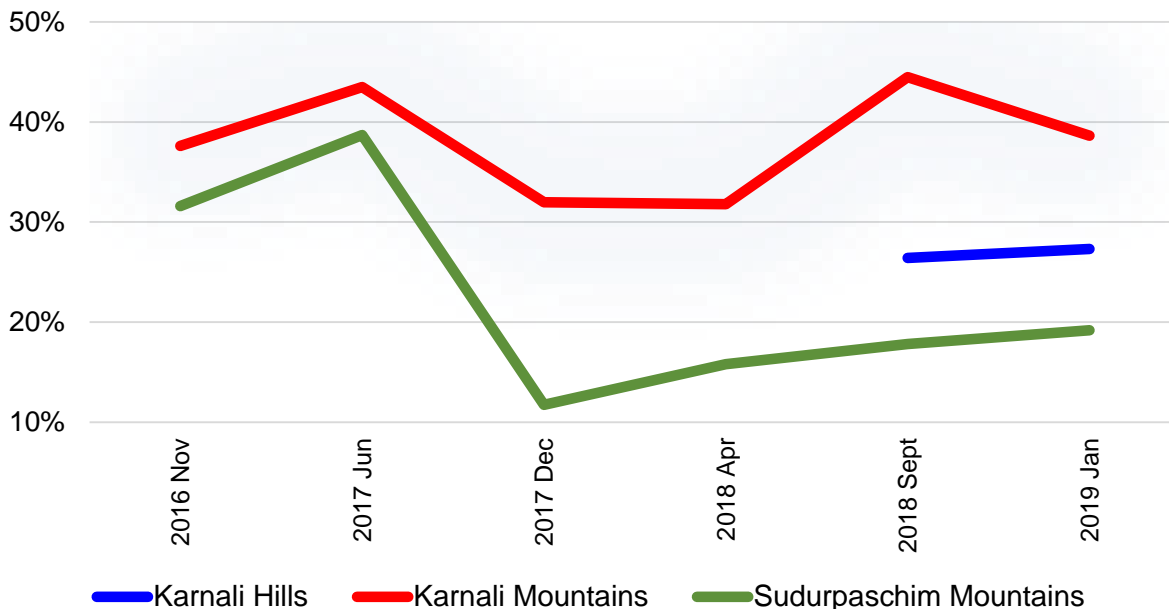
One third of all households reported recent shocks, with only 10 percent reporting having fully recovered.



Markets functioned smoothly throughout the surveyed area in terms of price, supply, demand and transportation services.



Figure 1: Trend of household with inadequate food consumption (%)



### Survey Methodology

The mVAM household survey conducted in January 2019 follows a panel design using a multi-stage stratified cluster sample, covering three strata—Karnali hills and mountains, and Sudurpaschim mountains. This is the fifth round, following a September 2018 round and November 2016 baseline survey.

### Household characteristics

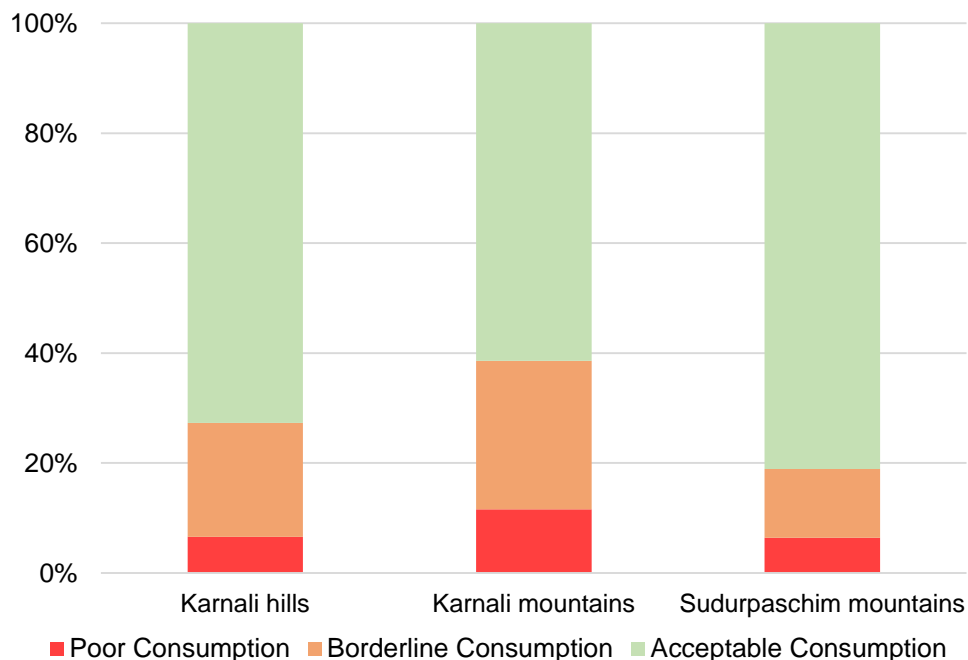
- 1436 respondents interviewed
- 6 members per household on average
- 38 percent of households are female-headed
- 39 percent of heads of household are illiterate

Photo credit: WFP Nepal

# Food Security

Overall 28 percent of households' food consumption was inadequate, with low dietary diversity. Sudurpaschim Districts are gradually improving, Karnali Districts have maintained consistently high levels of food insecurity.

**Figure 2: Household with inadequate food consumption (%)**



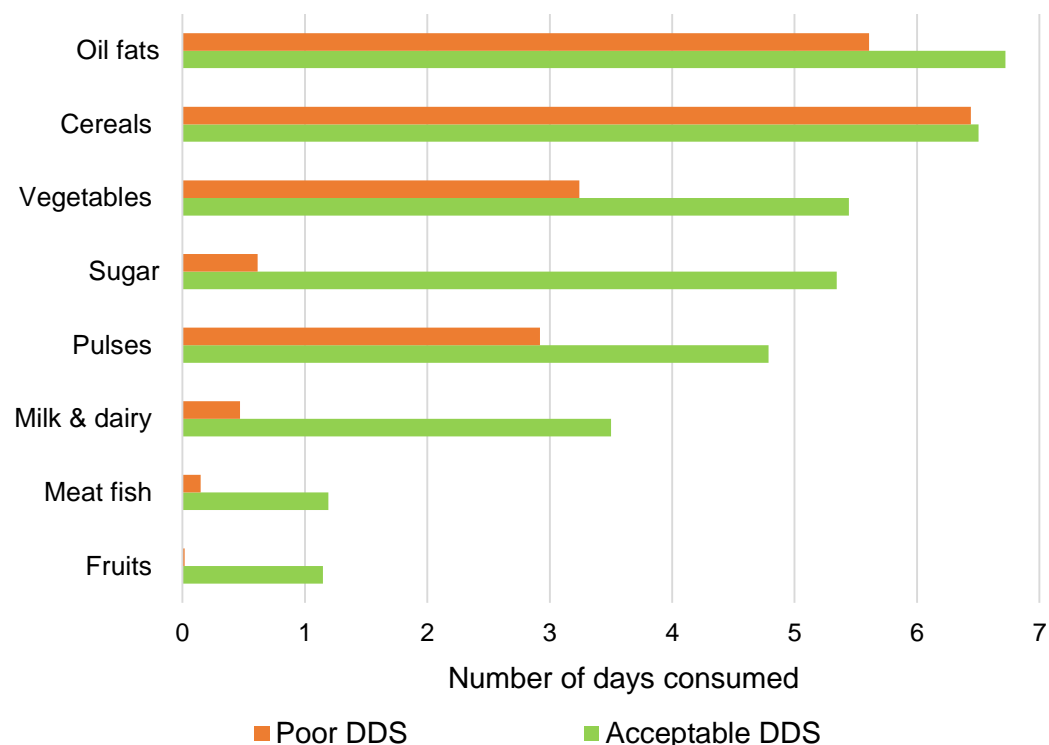
On average, households regularly consumed 6 out of 8 food groups (Figure 3). However nearly 11 percent of households' dietary diversity was considered poor. Again, Karnali Mountain Districts were more seriously affected, with over 1 in 4 households having poor dietary diversity.

Households with an insufficiently diversified diet have an almost negligible consumption of high-nutrient foods such as meat and fish, milk and dairy products and fruit, based on a recall of the past 7 days. Low levels of education and remoteness are both highly correlated with poor dietary diversity, which also disproportionately affects households that do not receive remittances.

Almost three in ten households had insufficient food consumption overall, with a sharp upward divergence in Karnali Mountain Districts (at 39%) compared to other surveyed zones. While 8 percent of households had poor food consumption, this rate was close to double in Karnali Mountains (Figure 2), the most food insecure region of Nepal.

In general, food security as measured by the food consumption score improves during the harvest seasons (November-December and March-April), while it deteriorates during lean seasons (June-September), indicating household production as major source of foods for the majority of people in the surveyed areas.

**Figure 3: Average number of food groups consumed over 7-day recall period, by diet diversity (DDS) outcome**



# Livelihoods, shocks and coping

Two-thirds of surveyed households reported cereal-based agriculture as their primary source of income. A full third of households reported experiencing shocks in the past 6 months.

**Table 1: Primary sources of household income (%)**

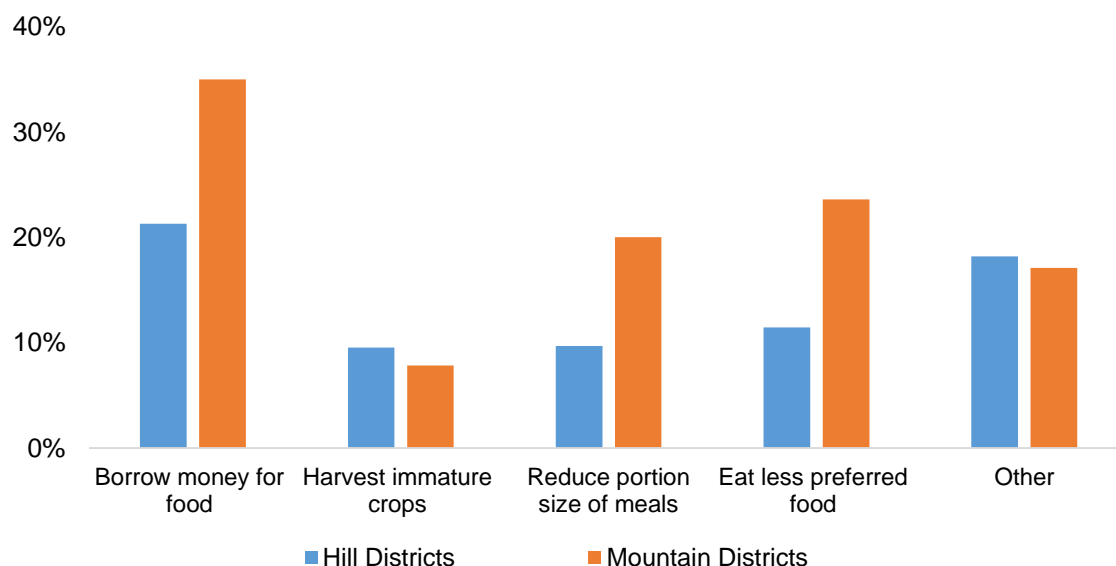
	K. Hills	K. Mountains	S. Mountains
Agri-Cereals	71%	78%	44%
Agri-Cash crops	7%	12%	3%
Livestock farming	17%	4%	8%
Agri wage labour	19%	2%	17%
Other unskilled labour	5%	28%	21%
Skilled labour	2%	2%	0%
Remittances	2%	2%	0%
Salaried	23%	17%	29%
Trade & business	22%	28%	22%
Sale of NTFP	0%	2%	0%
Social benefits	2%	2%	2%

Cereal-based agriculture was the primary livelihood for 66 percent of households surveyed, followed by salaried employment and trade/business (both at 23%). These livelihood options are more prevalent in the Karnali Hills area, with its higher road penetration and larger markets, facilitating trade (Table 1). The contribution of agriculture to household income in Sudurpaschim Mountain Districts has decreased significantly since 2016, leading to a more diversified livelihoods profile.

Overall, one third of households reported facing some form of shock in the past 6 months, with this number climbing up to 45 percent in Karnali Mountains, followed by Sudurpaschim Mountains (41%). Overall the most common shocks were those of human diseases, illness and death in the household (21%), followed by crop loss (7%). More households in Karnali Mountains reported crop loss (12%), consistent with natural hazards such as hailstorms, which cause significant crop damage in the region each year.

Of the 34 percent of households reporting experiencing shocks, only 10 percent reported having recovered fully, and 56 percent partially. This low-level of recovery from shocks reflects a fragile household resilience and appears closely related to the frequency of vulnerable, less-diversified livelihood strategies. Mountain households in Karnali and Sudurpaschim borrowed money, ate less preferred food and reduced meal portions at a higher rate than Karnali Hills households.

**Figure 4: Coping strategies employed**



# Markets and prices

Most markets monitored in Karnali and mountain districts of Sudurpaschim provinces are operating normally with food retail prices on a downward trend compared to September 2018 and same period last year

Average retail prices of food commodities are normally higher in Karnali Mountains, due in large part to its limited and poor road networks, entailing higher transportation costs, even compared to Sudurpaschim mountain Districts. In January 2019, prices of coarse rice and wheat flour in Karnali Mountains were more than 28 percent and 19 percent higher than Karnali Hills and Sudurpaschim Mountains respectively (Table 2).

The overall price trend of food commodities was relatively stable due to sufficient availability of food both from domestic production and imports. This was due at least in part to improved access to rural roads and stable transportation services (Figures 5 and 6). Moreover, retail prices were generally high during lean periods (June – September) and relatively low during harvest seasons (November - February).

Most traders (90%) in the survey area reported that commodities were sufficiently available in the markets, while the rest of markets had insufficient availability of food commodities (Figure 7). Markets with relatively better access to roads and supply chains had a better reported sufficiency of food commodities, such as Karnali Hills compared to markets in the remote mountain areas.

A majority of traders reported that the overall market situation was of 'average' or 'medium' level for demand (61%), supply (69%) and transportation services (87%), while 17 percent reported a high market demand and 18 percent a high supply (Figure 8).

Figure 5: Price trend of cereal foods

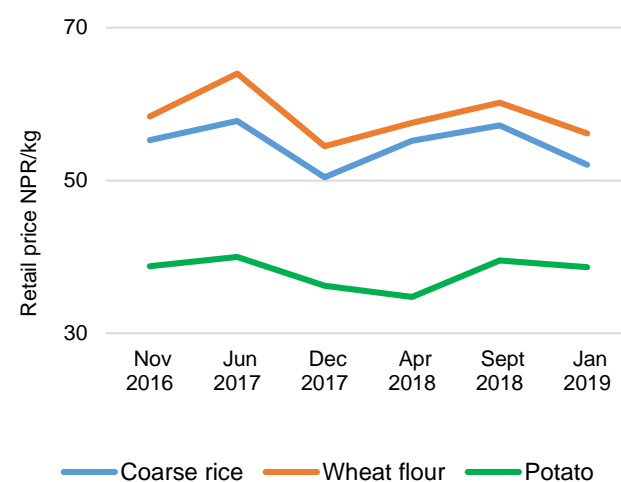


Figure 6: Price trend of food commodities

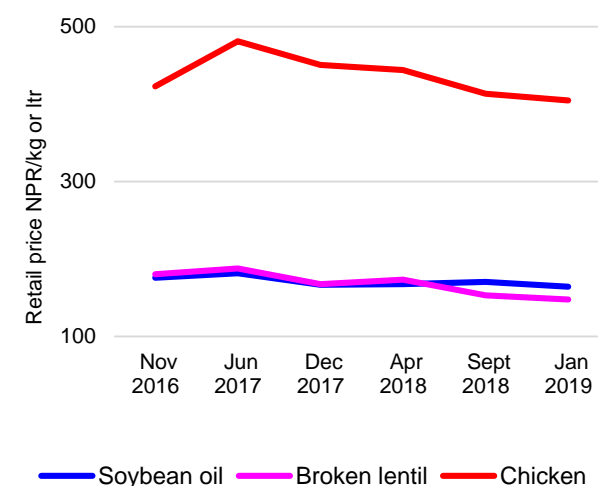


Table 2 : Retail price of food commodities by strata (NPR/kg or ltr)

	Coarse rice	Wheat flour	Soybean oil	Broken lentil	Potato	Chicken meat
Karnali Hills	45	50	147	127	38	349
Karnali Mountains	59	63	177	162	41	445
Sudurpaschim Mountains	47	53	168	158	36	427

Figure 7 : Commodity availability in the markets (% of traders)

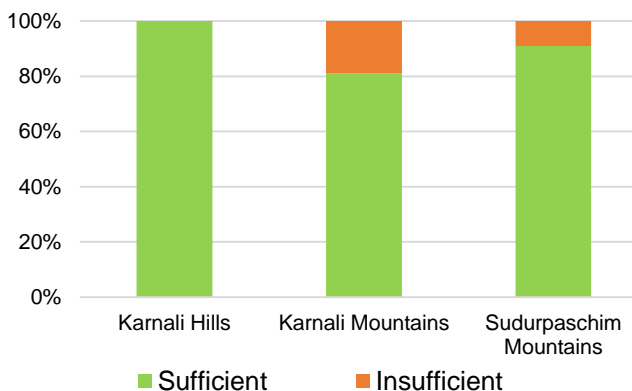
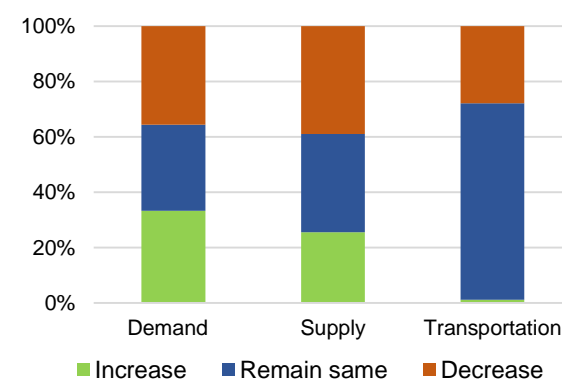


Figure 8: Current market situation (% of traders)



# Food security and migration

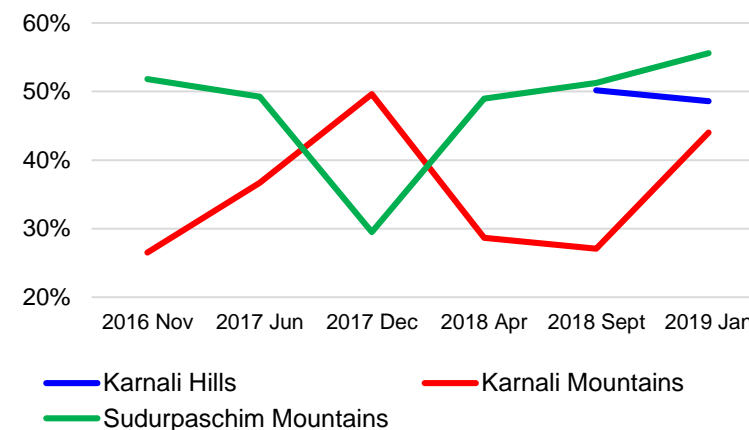
Households receiving higher amount of remittances are relatively better off and food secure. Migration is seen as one of the key components of livelihood strategies to overcome food insecurity and negative shocks.

Migration has become one of the livelihood strategies in Karnali and Sudurpaschim Provinces. There is overwhelming evidence that remittances are positively tied to the wellbeing of the migrant-sending households (Cohen, 2011). Seasonal migration patterns are historically linked with crop production cycles and other employment opportunities in the region, and migration is considered a coping strategy for many households. The flow of migration in this area was mainly internal and to India in the past, however there has been a significant increase in migration to Gulf countries and Malaysia over the past couple of decades driven by better job opportunities and higher earnings.

The findings from previous mVAM surveys show that 40 percent of households have at least one migrant member and the flow of migration has been increasing steadily (Figure 9). One in two household has at least one absentee in January 2019. 44 percent of migrant-sending households received remittances during the last year. A majority of households (80%) reported that they mostly spent remittance income on food consumption.

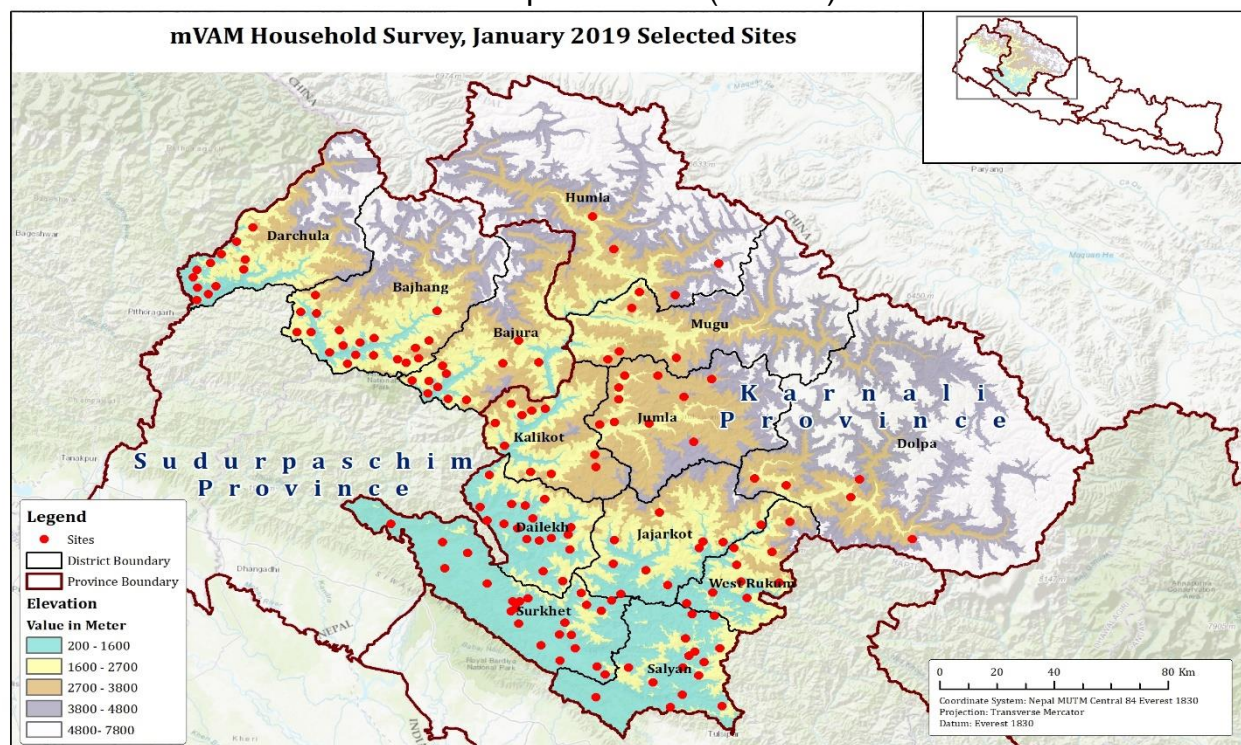
More than three quarters of migrant-sending households are food secure, with only 6 percent reporting poor food consumption. Moreover, remittance earnings are a significant predictor of household food consumption status (Table 3).

**Figure 9: Migration flows by the percentage of households with at least one migrant**



**Table 3 : Average remittance income by FCS group (NPR/year)**

Household food consumption	Average remittance (NPR/year)
Poor	33,875
Borderline	50,614
Adequate	76,406



## Further information

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Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development  
 United Nations World Food Programme

### Reference

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[http://vam.wfp.org/sites/mvam\\_monitoring/index.html](http://vam.wfp.org/sites/mvam_monitoring/index.html)

