Lebanon's Food Insecurity Crisis: Economic Pressures, Conflict Damage, and a Worsening Outlook for 2027

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Contact Information

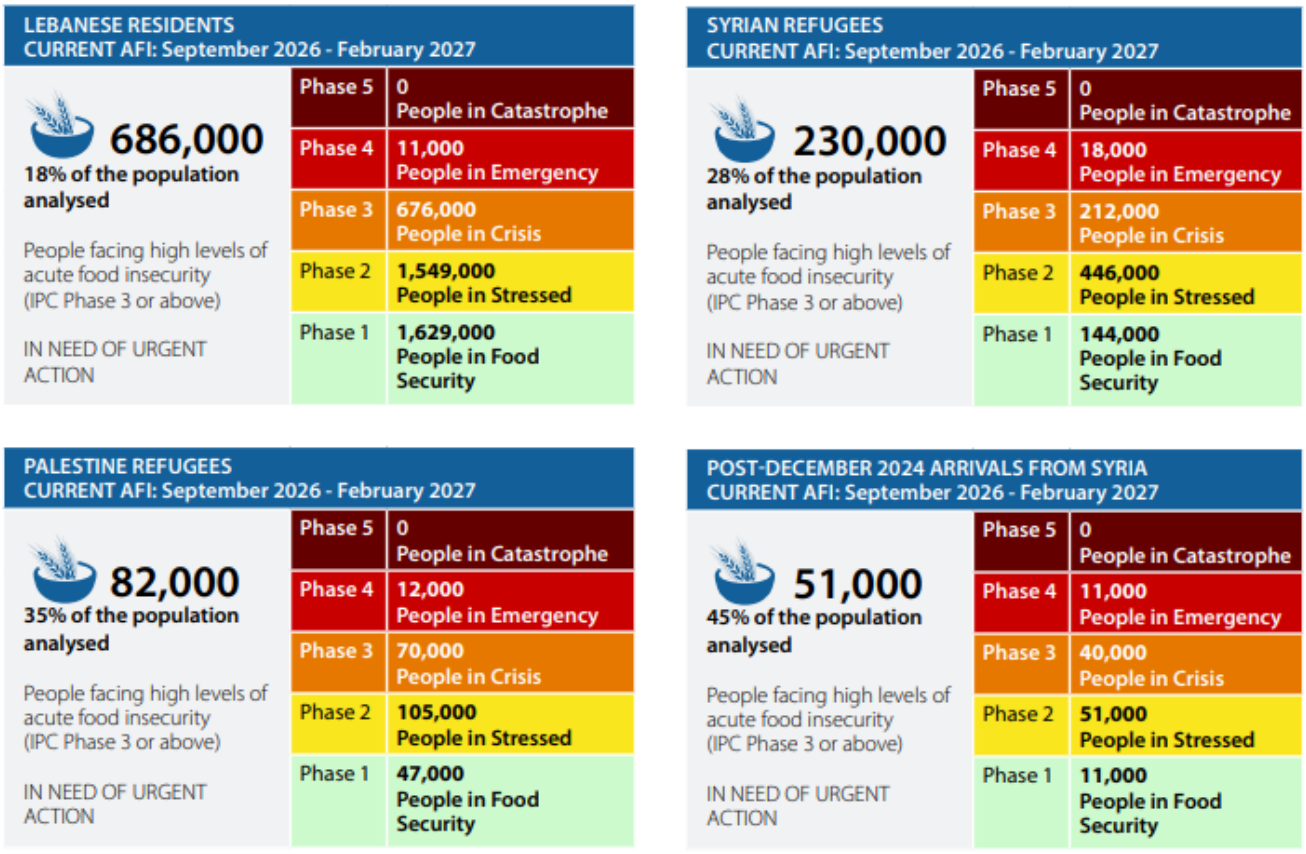
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Lebanon continues to face significant food security challenges as successive conflicts, prolonged economic instability, and declining purchasing power place growing pressure on households. The **Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Acute Food Insecurity Analysis for Lebanon published on November 5, 2026**, estimates that approximately 1.05 million people, or 21% of the analyzed population, are experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity between September 2026 and February 2027. This includes around 1.83 million people in IPC Phase 1 (Food Security), 2.15 million in Phase 2 (Stressed), 997,000 people in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis), and 52,000 in Phase 4 (Emergency). While those in Phase 2 struggle to meet essential needs, individuals in Phase 3 and 4 face increasingly severe food insecurity requiring urgent action. Although the findings indicate a slight improvement compared with the previous assessment, partly reflecting a reduction in the Syrian refugee population, the outlook remains concerning, with approximately 1.15 million people projected to face Crisis or worse conditions between March and July 2027.

Food insecurity affects all population groups, although its severity varies considerably. Lebanese residents account for the largest affected population, with approximately 686,000 people, or 18%, facing Crisis or worse conditions. Syrian refugees follow with around 230,000 people (28%), while approximately 82,000 Palestine refugees (35%) experience similar conditions. The highest prevalence is recorded among individuals arriving from Syria after December 2024, with approximately 51,000 people (45%) affected. These disparities reflect the greater vulnerability of refugee populations, who face limited employment opportunities, financial insecurity, and dependence on humanitarian assistance. Geographically, El Nabatieh and Bent Jbeil-Marjaayoun

record the highest prevalence among Lebanese residents, at approximately 30%, followed by Akkar, Sour, and Baalbek-El Hermel at 25%. In absolute terms, Saida has the largest number of affected Lebanese residents, at around 110,000, followed by Sour and Baabda with approximately 73,000 each, and Akkar with 68,000.



Source: IPC Lebanon Report, November 2026

The deterioration is closely linked to the cumulative consequences of the 2023-2024 conflict and the renewed escalation that began in March 2026. Preliminary government estimates cited in the IPC report indicate that the combined economic cost of both conflicts exceeded $20 billion by September 2026 and could surpass $27 billion once the full impact is assessed. The latest escalation alone generated an estimated $3-4 billion in direct damage and at least $4-5 billion in additional economic losses. A UNDP-CNRS assessment also identified 52,284 damaged buildings in southern Lebanon, including 24,068 destroyed. Beyond physical destruction, repeated hostilities have disrupted businesses, agricultural production, employment, and essential services, preventing households from recovering from previous losses and weakening their ability to generate income.

Displacement has further intensified these pressures. As of September 15, 2026, the International Organization for Migration recorded approximately 341,228 internally displaced individuals and 864,680 returnees. Around 86% of internally displaced people were concentrated in Beirut, Saida, Sour, Chouf, Aley, and El Nabatieh, while 78% were renting accommodation, adding substantial pressure to household expenditure. Returning home does not necessarily indicate a return to normal living conditions, as damaged housing, limited employment, disrupted services, and reconstruction expenses continue to strain family finances. For many households, accommodation, transportation, and repair costs compete directly with spending on food, while repeated displacement and depleted savings have weakened their capacity to recover.

Economic weakness represents another major contributor to food insecurity, as relative exchange-rate stability has not translated into meaningful improvements in purchasing power. The World Bank's August 2026 outlook, cited in the report, projected a 6.4% economic contraction in 2026, reversing an earlier forecast of 4.8% growth before the conflict escalation. Weaker tourism, private consumption, and business activity have further constrained employment and household earnings. Meanwhile, annual inflation reached approximately 17% in August 2026, with consumer prices increasing by 1.4% monthly. The World Food Programme estimated the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket for a five-person household at $556 in August, increasing by 7% since February and 11% annually, while the broader Minimum Expenditure Basket reached $713.

Rising international food and energy prices have added to these pressures. The FAO Food Price Index reached 136 in September 2026, increasing by 5.8% year-on-year, while disruptions to regional oil production and exports contributed to higher energy costs. In Lebanon, diesel and gasoline prices rose by 94% and 68%, respectively, between February and September 2026. These increases have affected transportation, electricity generation, irrigation, refrigeration, and food distribution, raising the cost of producing and accessing essential goods. Consequently, households are increasingly forced to balance food expenditure against rent, healthcare, energy, and other necessities.

Employment losses have further weakened households' ability to afford adequate food. An International Labour Organization survey conducted in May 2026 found that 33% of surveyed private-sector workers employed before March were no longer working, reaching 76% in El Nabatieh and 43% in South Lebanon. Average labor income has also declined by an estimated 40%.

Broader household monitoring indicated a national employment rate of 45% and unemployment of 29%, with particularly high unemployment in Saida (43%), Sour (39%), and Bent Jbeil-Marjaayoun (38%). Reduced earnings, depleted savings, and growing indebtedness have consequently increased dependence on borrowing and negative coping strategies, leaving households with limited capacity to absorb further economic shocks.

These pressures are reflected in household food consumption patterns. Although 88% of Lebanese households reported acceptable food consumption in 2026, severe consumption-based coping increased from 11% in 2025 to 19%, while reliance on crisis or emergency livelihood strategies rose from 13% to 17%. Among Syrian refugees, approximately 33% reported poor or borderline food consumption, while 42% adopted severe consumption-based coping strategies. Vulnerabilities were also evident among Palestine refugees and recent arrivals from Syria, with the latter reporting particularly widespread reliance on negative coping measures. These findings suggest that many households are maintaining adequate food consumption by borrowing, reducing dietary quality, cutting essential expenditure, or relying on assistance, rather than benefiting from improved financial conditions. Therefore, relatively stable food consumption does not necessarily indicate sustainable food security.

Despite these challenges, food availability remains broadly stable nationally, making affordability a central concern. Lebanese customs data indicate that food imports reached approximately 1.82 million tons during January-August 2026, increasing by 1.8% annually, including around 928,000 tons of cereals. Domestic cereal production was estimated at 160,000 tons, close to its five-year average, although imports remain essential to meeting national consumption needs. The WFP Market Functionality Index improved from 5.4 in March to 6.9 in August 2026, but remained below the 7.8 recorded in September 2025.

However, market recovery remains uneven. El Nabatieh recorded a functionality score of only 2.3, compared with 7.3 in South Lebanon and Baabda, reflecting persistent insecurity, infrastructure damage, and supply disruptions. Although the proportion of functional retailers improved, particularly in conflict-affected areas, households continue to face financial barriers. Approximately 28% of Lebanese households reported difficulties accessing markets, with 83% of those households identifying insufficient money as the main obstacle. This reinforces the report's central finding that

Lebanon's food insecurity is driven primarily by limited economic access to food rather than a nationwide shortage, although localized supply constraints remain significant.

Agricultural livelihoods have also suffered considerable damage, weakening rural incomes and productive capacity. Assessments by the Ministry of Agriculture and the National Council for Scientific Research identified approximately 56,264 hectares of affected agricultural land, while nearly 78% of farmers in southern Lebanon were displaced. Further assessments estimated $89 million in direct damage to perennial crops, particularly olive and citrus orchards, alongside $66 million in field-crop production losses between May and August 2026, largely affecting tobacco production. These losses add to an estimated $704 million in agricultural damage and losses caused by the 2023-2024 conflict. Damaged irrigation networks, greenhouses, livestock facilities, and productive assets, combined with elevated fuel, fertilizer, and transportation costs, continue to restrict agricultural recovery. Beyond affecting production, these disruptions reduce farmers' incomes and their ability to afford food, highlighting the importance of restoring agricultural livelihoods.

The nutritional consequences are equally concerning, particularly among children and vulnerable families. During the first half of 2026, approximately 1,074 children under five were admitted to malnutrition treatment programs, compared with 751 during the corresponding period in 2025. Admissions were concentrated mainly in Akkar, followed by Baalbek, Tripoli, and Zahle, although the report cautions that treatment admissions do not directly represent national malnutrition prevalence. Surveillance covering 3,306 children under two found that only approximately 15% met minimum dietary diversity requirements, while 25% of children aged 6–23 months consumed two or fewer meals daily. Financial constraints, limited access to nutritious food, and the widespread availability of inexpensive, ultra-processed products have contributed to poor dietary quality. Consequently, Lebanon continues to face the combined challenges of undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and overweight or obesity.

Humanitarian food security assistance remains essential in preventing more severe deterioration, particularly among refugees, displaced populations, and vulnerable Lebanese households. During the current assessment period, assistance coverage was estimated at approximately 23% among Lebanese residents, 50% among long-staying Syrian refugees, and 45% among recent arrivals from Syria, although coverage estimates are not fully comparable across groups. Nevertheless, the food

component of cash assistance covered only around 46% of the food Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket, limiting its effectiveness against rising costs.

The anticipated reduction in humanitarian assistance represents a major risk for March-July 2027. Based on secured resources at the time of the assessment, average monthly assistance is projected to reach approximately 247,000 Lebanese residents, 200,000 long-staying Syrian refugees, and 31,000 recent arrivals from Syria. No funding was confirmed for June and July 2027, while no specific food security assistance was secured for Palestine refugees during the projection period. This reduction could push households currently classified in Phase 2 into more severe food insecurity, particularly where employment and livelihood recovery remain limited. Humanitarian assistance therefore continues to serve as an important buffer against worsening food consumption and household vulnerability.

Looking ahead, the IPC projects that approximately 1.15 million people, or 24% of the analyzed population, will face IPC Phase 3 or above between March and July 2027, an increase of around 97,000 people, or 9%, compared with the current period. More significantly, the number in Phase 4 (Emergency) is expected to rise by approximately 86%, from 52,000 to 97,000, indicating deterioration in the severity of food insecurity. Another 1.96 million people are projected to remain in Phase 2, bringing the combined population in Phase 2 or above to approximately 3.11 million, or nearly 65% of those analyzed.

Among Lebanese residents, approximately 805,000 people (21%) are projected to face Crisis or worse conditions, including 49,000 in Emergency. El Nabatieh and Bent Jbeil-Marjaayoun are expected to record the highest prevalence at 35%, followed by Akkar, Sour, and Baalbek-El Hermel at 30%. Saida is projected to have the largest affected Lebanese population, at around 137,000. Meanwhile, approximately 192,000 Syrian refugees (32%), 94,000 Palestine refugees (40%), and 56,000 recent arrivals from Syria (50%) are expected to experience Crisis or worse conditions. The lower absolute number of affected Syrian refugees reflects a smaller projected refugee population rather than improved food security, as their relative prevalence increases. Palestine refugees are also expected to experience a significant deterioration, with the number in Emergency doubling from approximately 12,000 to 24,000.

Several risks could further undermine recovery, including continued hostilities, restricted access to agricultural land, damaged infrastructure, and delayed reconstruction in southern Lebanon. The anticipated drawdown of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) during 2027 also introduces uncertainty regarding security monitoring, humanitarian access, and local economic activity. Although the IPC's most likely scenario does not anticipate a major renewed conflict escalation, persistent insecurity could continue to disrupt livelihoods and discourage investment. Climate-related risks, including excessive rainfall, flooding, and potential damage to agricultural infrastructure, could further affect seasonal production, while high living costs and limited employment opportunities are expected to continue straining household budgets.

To prevent further deterioration, the IPC emphasizes the importance of maintaining humanitarian food assistance through July 2027, securing additional funding, and prioritizing vulnerable populations based on the severity of their needs. Assistance should reflect rising living costs, displacement, livelihood losses, and regional market conditions, particularly in El Nabatieh, where market functionality remains significantly weaker. The report also stresses that returning households should not automatically lose assistance when their housing, employment, or access to essential services has not recovered. Beyond immediate support, agricultural rehabilitation, restoration of productive assets, livelihood protection, strengthened nutrition programs, and continued monitoring of food prices, employment, displacement, and humanitarian coverage remain critical.

Overall, the IPC findings demonstrate that Lebanon's food insecurity is not primarily the result of insufficient national food supplies, but rather the cumulative effects of successive conflicts, weakened household incomes, elevated living costs, displacement, and limited economic recovery. Although humanitarian assistance and improving market conditions have helped prevent a more severe crisis, these gains remain fragile. Without sustained support and meaningful progress in restoring livelihoods, rebuilding productive capacity, and strengthening household purchasing power, a growing share of Lebanon's population risks facing increasingly severe food insecurity throughout 2027.

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