

Unlocking the power of partnership to address Yemen's food crisis and strengthen food system resilience

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KEY MESSAGES

- Yemen is experiencing one of the world's largest humanitarian crises resulting from prolonged conflict, with about half the population suffering from food insecurity.
- Food availability and affordability in Yemen is extremely vulnerable to external shocks because of the fragility of the national food system and its heavy dependence on food imports by the private sector and international humanitarian agencies.
- A recent workshop jointly organized by IFPRI and HSA Group reviewed the state of collaboration between key actors in Yemen's food system and discussed avenues to building strong cross-sector partnerships for ending the current food crisis and strengthening food system resilience.
- Limited collaboration among the public, private, and third sectors (for example, in the form of collective action, multistakeholder partnerships) contributes to inefficiencies in food supply chains and food aid delivery.
- Currently, collaborations are often ad hoc, limited to peer-to-peer partnerships, and constrained by a siloed mentality.
- With a potential peace agreement, new opportunities for cross-sector collaboration and strategic partnerships between food system actors are emerging.
- Enhanced communication among the public, private, and third sectors is an important first step toward improving mutual understanding, building trust, exchanging critical information and ideas, and realizing opportunities for effective collective action.

Yemen's food crisis and key food system actors

Yemen is experiencing one of the world's worst humanitarian crises in recent history as a result of the ongoing conflict, which began more than eight years ago. Today, the country faces a food crisis of unprecedented scale. Despite continuing humanitarian aid, about 17 million people – that is, about half the population – are food insecure (WFP 2023), and more than half a million children under the age of five are estimated to suffer from severe acute malnutrition (UNICEF 2023). This food crisis is a result of a combination of detrimental conditions, including the country's vulnerability to external shocks in the context of high dependence on imported food (such as global food price spikes associated with the conflict in Ukraine) (Kurdi et al. 2022a); a crushing decline

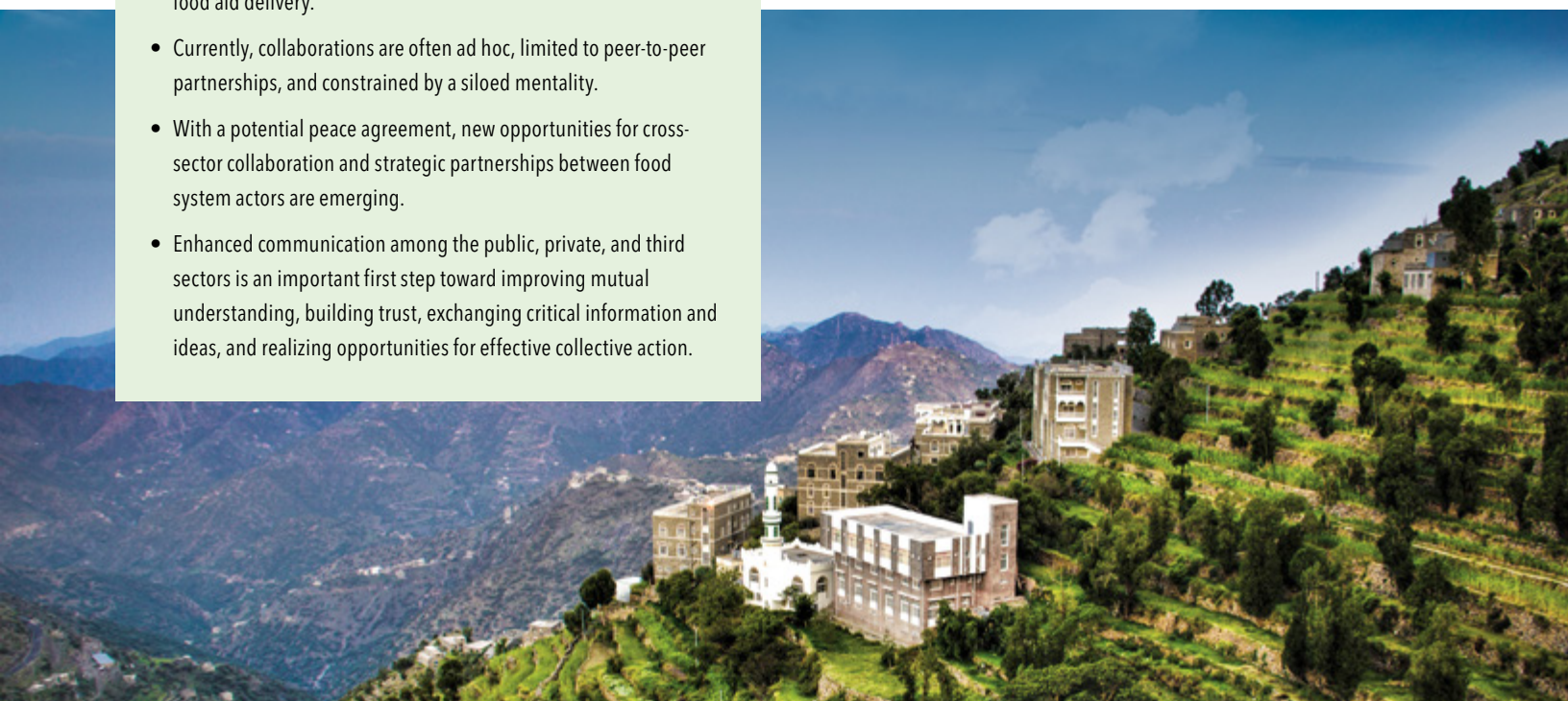
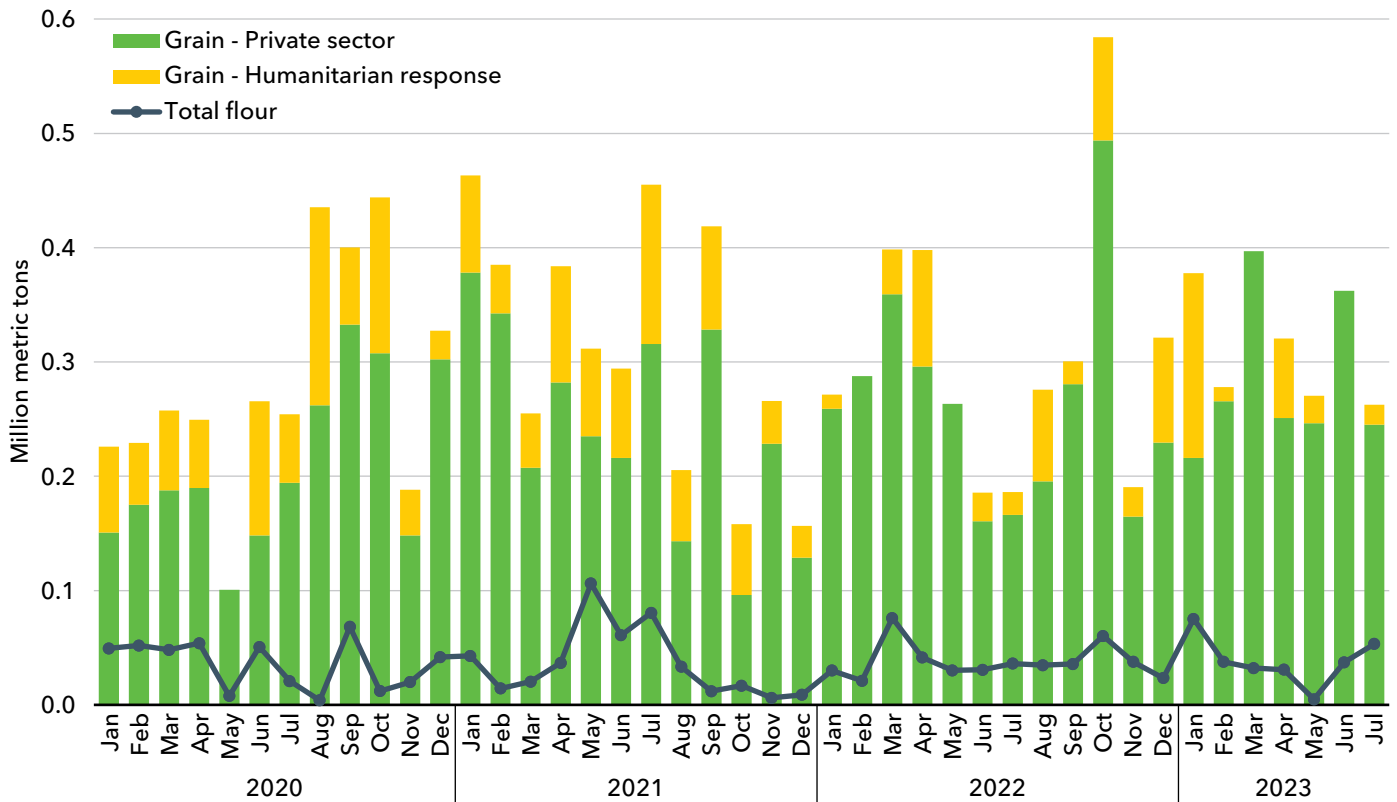


FIGURE 1 Wheat grain and flour imports to Yemen, 2020–2023



Source: Yemen Ports Authority data.

of domestic purchasing power driven by the substantial depreciation of the Yemeni rial between 2015 and 2023; long-standing underinvestment in agriculture and increasingly severe water shortages for domestic food production associated with climate change and extensive khat production; and the limitations of humanitarian aid operations, often due to funding shortages (UNHCR 2023) – all of which have been exacerbated by the long-running conflict (HSA Group 2022).

Food availability in Yemen is highly dependent on imports. An estimated 84 percent of food calories consumed in 2020 were imported – the vast majority in the form of staple grains, mostly wheat, but also vegetable oils and sugar (Kurdi et al. 2022a). Annual wheat grain imports alone amounted to between 3.38 and 3.75 million metric tons from 2020 to 2023 (Figure 1). Yet, in light of the food crisis, basic food needs far exceed the current consumption levels of the Yemeni population, and stabilization of the country and economic recovery will likely contribute to increasing demand for imported staple foods, at least in the short term.

Most news and international development organization reports examining food security in Yemen have emphasized the enormous scale of (publicly funded) food aid operations. Yet it is less well recognized that by far the largest share of food consumed is imported by the private sector. A small number of companies realize the bulk of food imports and transport throughout the country and thus bear a great responsibility for food supply stability and food access for most Yemenis. Wheat grain imports for humanitarian response accounted for 0.88 million tons in 2020 (Figure 1), but humanitarian agencies have been forced to scale down food distribution several times since then, due to global grain price increases and funding cuts (Kurdi et al. 2022b). Wheat grain imports by international humanitarian agencies dropped to 0.85 million tons in 2021 and then to 0.51 million tons in 2022. Conversely, annual wheat grain imports by the private sector increased by 0.40 million tons from 2020 to 2021 and again by 0.25 million tons in 2022, reaching a total of 3.16 million tons. Thus, 86 percent of total wheat grain imports in 2022 was

supplied by the private sector, up from 74 percent in 2020. Annual wheat flour imports between 2020 and 2022 amounted to 0.43 to 0.46 million tons, accounting for a stable 12 percent of total annual wheat imports. All imported wheat grain is milled, and some is further processed, by private sector processors. By far the largest food importer in Yemen is the Hayel Saeed Anam (HSA) Group¹, while among the humanitarian agencies, the World Food Programme (WFP) is the largest importer. HSA Group is also Yemen's leading grain miller and food manufacturer, and therefore has partnered with WFP and other international aid organizations to support humanitarian programs across the country.

Against this background and in recognition of the potential power of partnership in Yemen, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and HSA Group, through its Economic Development Initiatives (EDI), jointly organized an expert and stakeholder workshop in Amman, Jordan, on May 24, 2023. The main objectives of the workshop were to examine the state of public, private, and third sector² collaboration in Yemen; identify specific challenges for effective cooperation; critically reflect on the represented organizations' efforts to collaborate across sectors to address the current food crisis; and explore opportunities for stronger partnerships, especially between private and third sector actors, to build more resilient food systems in Yemen in the coming years. After explaining the rationale for improving cross-sector collaboration among food system actors in Yemen, this brief summarizes the workshop findings.

Rationale for improving cross-sector collaboration in Yemen

Collaboration among public, private, and third sector actors could increase the efficiency of food supply chains and food aid delivery in Yemen. Collaboration is especially pertinent given the existing mutual dependency of these sectors within the system and the capacity gaps between large and small actors. At present, cross-sector collaboration along Yemen's food supply chains is often limited to the requirements of current operations, and is

generally initiated on an ad hoc basis rather than with a long-term strategic view. However, partnerships within each of the sectors are more common and more often strategic in nature.

Private sector organizations bring specific capabilities and resources to partnerships that public sector organizations and, especially, international third sector organizations often lack, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected environments. These include simple decision-making procedures that enable quick responses to emergency situations and urgent needs; effective resource mobilization through leveraging existing networks and local connections as well as private capital; direct access to key assets such as food processing and storage facilities and logistics fleets; and good knowledge of (and some unique data on) local market conditions and consumer needs accrued from their long experience in-country and often close proximity to markets. Faced with a crippled national economy and the extensive destructive impact of the ongoing conflict on the business environment, Yemen's private sector has demonstrated great resilience in recent years (HSA Group 2023). About 75 percent of firms in operation before the conflict began in 2015 are still operating, and the private sector continues to dominate economic activities in the country (World Bank 2023). On the other hand, international third sector organizations can contribute critical financial and logistical resources to cross-sector collaboration, drawing from crucial expertise and experience working in similar complex environments, and ensuring international political support for humanitarian operations and development assistance.

While the specific reasons behind the lack of effective partnerships (particularly between private and third sector organizations) in Yemen are diverse, there are a number of common challenges (outlined in the workshop's opening session). First, there is no blueprint for successful cross-sector partnerships, so organizations must be prepared to innovate and venture into new territory to build these relationships. Second, there is often a lack of trust between parties because of presumed incompatibility of their different

¹ The Hayel Saeed Anam (HSA) Group is a family-owned conglomerate established in Yemen in 1938. Today it is the largest private company and a leading importer of food commodities and essential goods in Yemen, employing around 20,000 people.

² The "third sector" consists nongovernmental and other nonprofit organizations. It includes international development and humanitarian organizations as well as international research organizations. Third sector entities undertake social activities and emphasize their special responsibility for civil society beyond the roles of the public and private sectors.

primary objectives (e.g., profit maximization vs. poverty reduction) and operating principles. Third, external actors are often hesitant and risk-averse, and therefore avoid exploring options for new cross-sector partnerships (especially with organizations from fragile and conflict-affected countries), and thus prefer collaboration with established partners. With this in mind, it is clear that stronger collaboration between the public, private, and third sectors is urgently needed to respond effectively to Yemen's food crisis and strengthen resilience of the national food system.

Findings from an expert and stakeholder workshop

The workshop was designed to systematically review the state of public, private, and third sector collaboration in Yemen and discuss avenues to build strong cross-sector partnerships to end the current food crisis and strengthen food system resilience. To this end, it was based on established empirical concepts and followed a clear thematic structure. The adopted conceptual framework placed the concepts of achieving food security and building resilient food systems into the country context.³ The group discussions were organized along four related themes critical to food system transformation in Yemen (Box 1). A theme–issue matrix, shown in Figure 2, was used to guide the discussion. This brief summarizes the findings of the workshop discussions following the thematic structure.

³ This discussion was based on the following concepts: (1) "Food systems are the sum of actors and interactions along the food value chain – from input supply and production of crops, livestock, fish, and other agricultural commodities to transportation, processing, retailing, wholesaling, and preparation of foods to consumption and disposal. Food systems also include the enabling policy environments and cultural norms around food" (IFPRI 2023a). (2) "Building resilience means helping individuals, households, communities, and countries prepare for, mitigate, cope with, and recover from shocks – so that they can not only bounce back but become even better off" (IFPRI 2023b). (3) "Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO 1996).

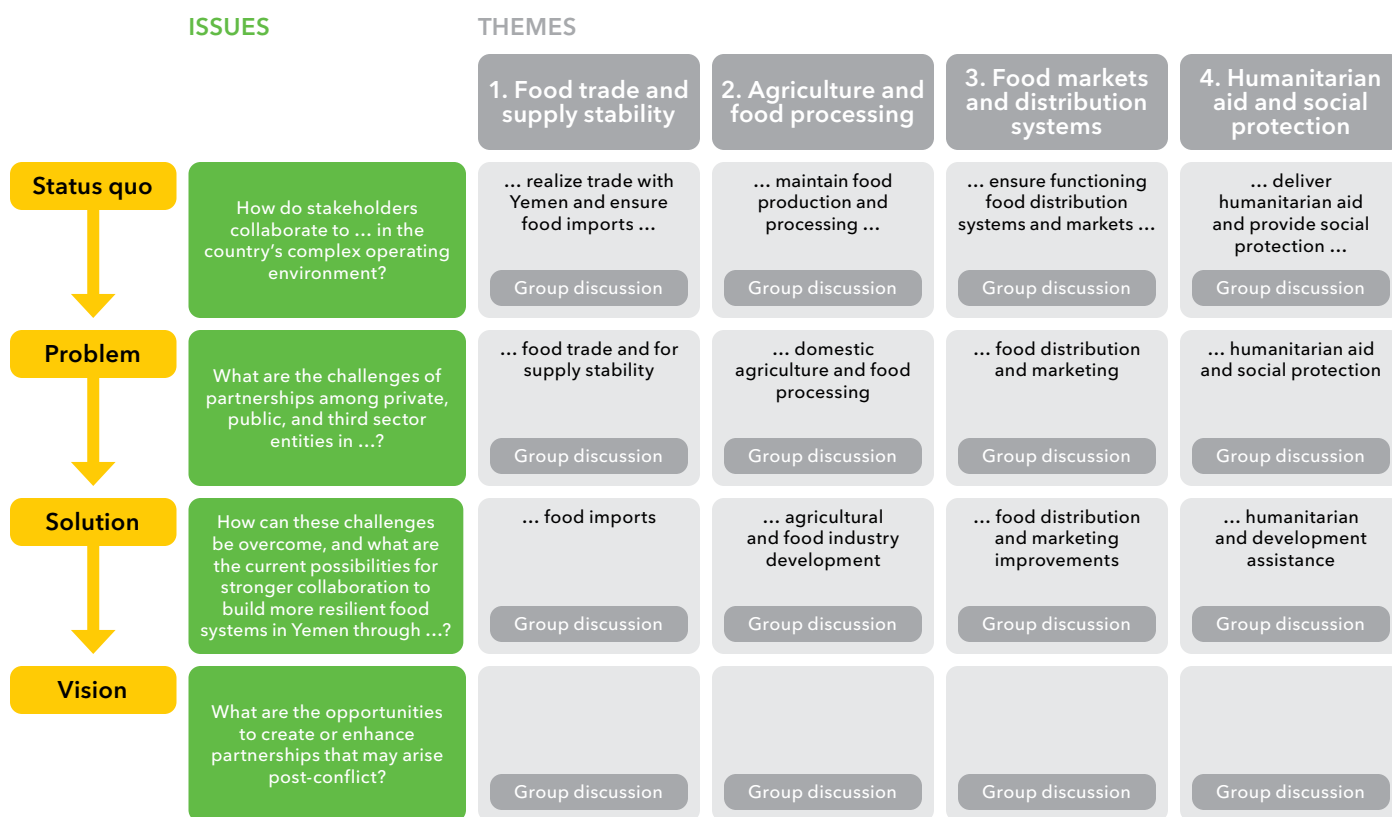
BOX 1 Workshop procedures

Discussions among workshop participants took place during two main workshop sessions that were structured similarly. The sessions were organized along four themes related to food system transformation in Yemen, with two themes addressed in parallel per session: "Food trade and supply stability" (Theme 1) and "Agriculture and food processing" (Theme 2) in the first session on "Partnering to improve food availability and affordability"; and "Food markets and distribution systems" (Theme 3) and "Humanitarian aid and social protection" (Theme 4) in the second session on "Partnering to accelerate transition from emergency response to development." Under each theme, small-group discussions were intended to address four coherent issues that related to the status quo, problem, solution, and vision and were formulated as guiding discussion questions (Figure 2).

Before the sessions broke into small groups, the discussions were initiated by a moderated panel discussion in the first session and a set of four short presentations in the second session, which provided background information and perspectives on the sessions' themes. The speakers were experts drawn from among the participants. The roundtable discussions in small groups were supported and documented by moderators and notetakers, who were assigned prior to the workshop. In each of the small-group discussion sections, half of the small groups addressed one of the two themes and half addressed the other theme. All participants had the opportunity to contribute to both themes during the plenary discussion that followed the small-group discussions. The plenary session also included time for each group to report on the key group discussion points. Prior to the workshop, all of the confirmed participants were assigned to 10 small groups of equal size, using a two-step approach. First, all participants were purposely divided into two large groups of equal size (primarily based on their knowledge of the two themes and organizational affiliation), and participants of each large group were then randomly assigned to five small groups of equal size. All discussion sessions were held under the Chatham House Rule.

The workshop invitees were carefully selected to obtain a broad range of experts on and key stakeholders of Yemen's food system. A total of 70 participants were drawn from Yemeni and large multinational businesses; Yemeni nongovernmental organizations and international humanitarian and development assistance organizations; Yemeni and international research organizations; and foreign government agencies and diplomatic representations to Yemen. Additionally, the convening organizations (supported by partner organizations and consultants) provided 10 moderators for the small-group discussions, 10 notetakers, and one master of ceremonies. The notes of the moderators and notetakers provided the basis for this brief.

FIGURE 2 Workshop discussions: Theme–issue matrix



Food trade and supply stability (theme 1)

STATUS QUO: Food trade and imports to Yemen have been significantly disrupted by over eight years of conflict and the associated economic crisis. Participants noted that the economic and logistics challenges faced by private sector organizations and humanitarian agencies alike have put considerable pressure on Yemen’s fragile food systems, contributing to the current food crisis. With most of the food consumed in Yemen imported by the private sector, specific challenges to ensure food supply stability mostly relate to financing food import shipments. These include a lack of access to international currencies (particularly US dollars); major additional logistical costs, such as war risk insurance and high fuel prices; and restricted price-setting ability for certain basic commodities, which limits the private sector’s ability to pass on cost increases from international markets. Due to the increased risks for international financiers and insurers of shipments to conflict-affected countries as well as the threat of international financial sanctions, the shares of pre-financing requirements in total shipment values are significantly more than normal rates. Further, the process for private sector firms to

amass the necessary capital in US dollars is both time-consuming and costly because of complex financial procedures within Yemen that – regardless of the source of financing – are a drain on financial resources and already limited working capital. Smaller Yemen-based traders are disproportionately affected by this situation, which in turn leads to reduced competition in Yemen’s food markets.

More recently, global supply chain disruptions due to the conflict in Ukraine have amplified existing challenges and significantly undermined food security, and threatened the stability of Yemen’s food supply. Following the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine in 2022, traders – particularly in the wheat and edible oils industries – were forced to re-work their international supply chains to ensure that sufficient staple food would continue to reach Yemen and alleviate the ongoing humanitarian crisis.

Reflecting on the drivers for food supply stability, participants emphasized that the main constraining factors have shifted. A year on from the major wheat price spike in May 2022, food availability – while important – is no longer the primary concern for the private or third sectors, despite the long-term food supply issues

caused by funding shortages for humanitarian operations. Rather, food affordability remains the primary issue, having been exacerbated by adverse economic, political, and logistical challenges in Yemen combined with high global food prices. Consumers' purchasing power has been impacted across the board, with stakeholders affected throughout Yemen's food value chains. The resulting decrease in food affordability, in turn, has depressed consumers' market demand for food, pushing more communities into hunger and toward dependence on humanitarian food aid.

PROBLEM: Participants observed that collaboration among food system actors has been limited, especially in recent years, due to a combination of factors including a siloed mentality, a lack of trust, the need to respond quickly to unexpected major global shocks, a reliance on personal relationships to facilitate trade, and the lack of a systematic approach for partnership and data collection and sharing. As a result, Yemen's food trade is both complex and inefficient, and actors – particularly in the private sector – address challenges in isolation, incurring considerable costs for “re-optimization” of trade flows. Such re-optimization challenges include finding new trade routes and other coping strategies to respond to changing security threats, as well as navigating new and at times inconsistent regulations in Yemen's two separately governed territories. The country's hostile business environment also presents several other challenges to trade partnerships, including lack of access to foreign currency, volatile exchange rates, limited and damaged infrastructure, and the unpredictable regulatory

environment – all of which increase costs and uncertainty among traders.

SOLUTION/VISION: To address these challenges, participants suggested that the governing authorities should establish a reliable framework for collaboration between the public, private, and third sectors; participate in and implement trust-building dialogues; and explore possibilities for improved market and consumer data collection, centralization, management, and access across the country. Likewise, private sector organizations should aim to increase peer-to-peer collaboration for exchanging security-related information, minimizing siloed re-optimization, identifying new market opportunities, pooling investments, and consolidating efforts to access finance needed for food imports as well as to improve import and trade logistics. Finally, international third sector organizations should seek to increase proactive engagement with Yemen's private sector to improve data collection on food production, trade, and consumption; enhance the impact of their interventions through better targeting and adopting approaches better tailored to local humanitarian needs; and readjust their assistance in favor of longer-term sustainable development initiatives – especially for accelerated growth of domestic food production and more resilient food systems.

Agriculture and food processing (theme 2)

STATUS QUO: Participants noted a range of challenges facing food production in Yemen, including limited



availability of arable land and low agricultural productivity due to severe water shortages, extensive khat production, lack of modern irrigation and agricultural infrastructure, lack of agricultural investments, loss of traditional skills to manage limited resources and cope with weather shocks, and hurdles hampering imports of agricultural inputs such as fertilizer and access to quality agricultural advisory services.

PROBLEM: In the face of Yemen's food production challenges, coordination is lacking not only between public, private, and third sectors but also within each of these sectors. Efforts focused on agricultural development are small-scale and not well integrated with larger humanitarian aid operations. The structure of the third sector in Yemen creates challenges for cross-sector partnerships. International nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) dominate humanitarian response and recovery efforts. They continue to follow a sequential approach of aid first and development second rather than a balanced approach of supporting livelihoods, despite increased interest and discussion around the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach. The lack of coordination among international NGOs also makes it difficult for other sectors to understand the linkages between various development interventions.

In terms of communication, participants reported high barriers to entry to the formal procurement process for domestic private sector firms and local NGOs that are interested in partnering with international NGOs. Smaller local organizations also feel that the conversation is dominated by the big players, and local knowledge is

given insufficient consideration. Yemen's public sector, on the other hand, is perceived as not understanding the needs of local consumers and the private sector. The current systems of regulation are seen as inefficient, incomplete, and inadequate to meet urgent needs, leaving open opportunities for corruption. Foreign currency restrictions and the lack of a consistent and unified taxation system are specific burdens that hinder not only private-sector-led agricultural development but also cross-sector collaborations.

Communication between the governing authorities and the private sector is limited, first because private sector actors lack formalized channels to contact their appropriate counterparts; and second, because the fast-moving and diverging regulatory environment is often unpredictable, eroding relationships between stakeholders. This situation is further complicated by the paucity of basic data on the current state of agriculture in Yemen, including what is being produced where, resource availability, and transport infrastructure. This means that both international organizations and Yemen's private sector have a limited understanding of where and which agricultural activities could produce effective returns on investment.

SOLUTION: Participants agreed that the private sector can and should do more to advocate collectively with the governing authorities. While farmers and agricultural and food processing firms have diverse interests, communication of shared concerns should be coordinated and advanced with a united voice, with the Chambers of Commerce being a potential forum for dialogue with





government authorities. Collective communication should also happen at the governorate level, as a decentralized approach could be helpful in Yemen's fractured political landscape.

Due to their greater convening power, large firms are seen as having a responsibility to support small producers in overcoming obstacles to agricultural development and building more resilient food systems. This includes linking small producers to input and sales markets; supporting development of local farmer cooperatives and agricultural capacities; leveraging modern and climate-smart technologies (such as cell phone penetration across rural Yemen, solar-energy-powered systems, and modern rainwater harvest and storage systems) to rekindle agriculture productivity, especially dryland and rainfed farming; and strengthening agricultural value chains overall through partnerships with the public and third sectors and financial institutions. The public and third sectors, on the other hand, can help by prioritizing interventions that incorporate sustainability and support for local food production and economic diversification. For example, school feeding programs can be leveraged to support local agricultural production, food processing, and meal preparation by incorporating locally produced foods and community-based school kitchens.

Finally, participants identified crucial opportunities for cross-sector partnerships in filling the enormous gaps in agricultural data and knowledge. While security threats still impede large-scale primary data collection,

satellite imagery supported by on-the-ground georeferencing can be used to get a better understanding of the current state of agriculture. Open access to this data will help to facilitate intervention development and collaborations, including by identifying strategic agricultural products.

VISION: Participants discussed the potential for an expanded role of the public sector, post-conflict, in infrastructure reconstruction, economic development, and particularly acquisition of necessary external funds. Given limited state capacity as a result of more than eight years of conflict, public-private partnerships and collaborations with the third sector will be essential for the reconstruction and development of local agricultural production and domestic food processing.

Food markets and distribution systems (theme 3)

STATUS QUO: The costs and complexity of moving goods into and within Yemen has increased dramatically in recent years. Participants noted that distribution costs have increased due to a range of largely conflict-related challenges, which, in turn, have led companies to implement coping mechanisms that affect the security and stability of Yemen's food supply. Many major roads have been closed to commercial and private transportation, forcing traders to seek alternative routes that are longer and sometimes more dangerous. Longer journeys and bumpy roads have



implications for food safety and quality and also drive up transport costs throughout the country.

PROBLEM: Participants again ascertain that collaboration both across sectors and within the private sector is very limited in such a volatile environment, which increases pressure on all food system actors. Many smaller firms have been unable to absorb the additional costs of transporting food and must either restrict their distribution areas or subcontract to larger traders to ensure that supplies are maintained, limiting their potential profits. Adding to that, complex and fragmented regulation and taxation systems erode established relationships between the public and private sectors – a situation that the Chambers of Commerce in both parts of Yemen have seemingly been unable to address, despite periodic meetings.

SOLUTION/VISION: Despite these challenges, there are opportunities for greater collaboration and more strategic partnerships within and across sectors. Within the private sector, stronger partnerships can help to address common logistical bottlenecks that often affect large and small food distributors, though the impacts tend to be more severe, and the barriers to their resolution disproportionately higher, for small distributors. Large distributors may also be able to offer warehousing solutions to support logistics and access to markets, as well as innovative financing solutions.

In the continued absence of public investments to repair damaged transport infrastructure, the private

sector in partnership with international organizations will likely be required to step in to reopen key roads and bridges by pooling investments and capabilities, in order to reestablish effective food distribution systems in the country. That said, there remains little hope for private sector (co)financing for infrastructure reconstruction in the near future, as long as the current food import challenges and related financial burden of larger importers persist, because these firms are also the potential key actors who retain prime business interests and could provide a large share of the required resources.

Humanitarian aid and social protection (theme 4)

STATUS QUO: Humanitarian aid and social protection in Yemen are currently largely dominated by national and international NGOs, with approximately 130 organizations focused on food aid distribution and humanitarian response (OCHA 2023). Participants observed that some programs are effective in responding to specific humanitarian needs, such as a large-scale school feeding program implemented by WFP. While program-based partnerships do exist, they seem to be limited to peer-to-peer collaborations and exclusive of others.

PROBLEM: Most notably, large international NGOs tend to partner with other international NGOs already operating in the country rather than smaller, local NGOs, despite their extensive presence throughout the country.

Accordingly, local NGOs struggle to take on a major role in humanitarian aid and social protection, despite a presumably better understanding of the local context and people's needs. While local NGOs cannot operate independently at a large scale, the administrative costs of navigating bureaucratic barriers make it difficult for them to partner with the large international NGOs that dominate the humanitarian sector.

Local NGOs also face difficulties in competing with international NGOs. These include financial restrictions on bringing international funds into Yemen. In addition, smaller organizations typically have less leverage in negotiating with local authorities. This is particularly a challenge regarding women's representation and leadership, as local authorities in the northern governorates have implemented significant restrictions on women's work and movement. Moreover, attempts to establish new partnerships, as well as existing collaboration, are often characterized by long and exhaustive consultations and coordination processes.

In addition, international funding is currently strongly concentrated on humanitarian aid. This is to the detriment of urgently needed development assistance and risks creating long-term aid dependencies. However, with a possible peace agreement between the main parties to the conflict, an intended shift in international donors' mindset toward a greater balance between humanitarian aid and development assistance is apparent.

A final key challenge is the sustainability of humanitarian aid, given a lack of engagement with local authorities in terms of promoting a locally owned social protection system. Instead, the pre-existing social protection system and the now expansive humanitarian aid system are completely dependent on external sources. Donations from the private sector cannot be a replacement for declining external funding, as the private sector has already been under heavy pressure from local authorities to finance public goods and works.

SOLUTION: While large-scale humanitarian aid programs will likely remain necessary at least for the next few years, more focus is needed on supporting livelihoods for human dignity and promoting economic recovery. This includes more cash-based humanitarian assistance instead of food aid, which will stimulate demand in local food markets. Cash transfers have been shown to mitigate conflict impacts on child nutrition in Yemen, providing an effective development policy tool for addressing the country's humanitarian crisis (Ecker et al. 2023; Kurdi

2021). A common perception is that donors are ready and willing to reallocate more funds toward sustainable social protection programs and development investments, while implementing organizations tend to have a preference for continuing familiar models. Rebalancing international support will offer new opportunities for cross-sector collaborations and strategic partnerships.

Even under current conditions, there are several ways in which the private and third sectors could better collaborate to deliver humanitarian aid. The private sector has capital equipment such as food storage facilities and processing plants that could be better utilized for the international humanitarian response. Private sector firms not only have excess storage and processing capacities due to reduced consumer demand, but also have advanced factory installations using the latest technology for supply chain tracking, which could support monitoring and optimization efforts in the humanitarian response. Partnering with local finance institutions could, for example, allow mobile money and e-wallets to be used for humanitarian cash transfers, or for subsidized credits to be offered to smallholders to encourage investment.

To move from the current system of international NGO dominance in humanitarian aid and social protection toward one in which greater collaboration with local NGOs and the private sector would be possible, it is crucial to standardize the funding channels and develop a more easily navigated system for contracting, while also acknowledging that certain regulations are vital for good governance to avoid waste or fraud. Social protection needs to be run through local institutions, with the involvement of governments and local authorities. Because public involvement is currently so limited, initial frameworks for dialogue among the public, private, and third sectors are needed as a means to build trust and confidence before partnerships can be developed. Post-conflict, the government needs to take on a central role in social protection. As potential collaboration develops, research has a key role to play in understanding what works and creating a trusted system of monitoring and evaluation.

VISION: In a potential post-conflict future, a more sustainable social protection system requires the incorporation of considerable government funding – not only aid funding – and making sure that such a commitment, as well as the funding sources from taxation, is built into development plans.

Conclusions

The workshop discussions clearly highlighted the lack of strong collaboration between public, private, and third sector organizations, which contributes to inefficiencies in Yemen's food systems and food aid delivery. This marks a stark discrepancy with the mutual dependence of the different sector actors along Yemen's food supply chains, with most staple foods being imported by the private sector or humanitarian agencies and stored and processed by private sector firms.

While there are many reasons why there are few effective partnerships, especially between private and third sector organizations, a commonly voiced explanation is a lack of knowledge of each other's engagement and a lack of mutual trust, which reflects presumed incompatibility of their different primary objectives and operating principles. Enhanced communication between the public, private, and third sectors is therefore essential to build trust, exchange information, and explore opportunities for effective joint work and strategic partnerships in Yemen. With a potential peace agreement between the main parties to the conflict (UN 2023), new opportunities are likely to arise, especially with increasing efforts of international development organizations to re-engage in Yemen and scale up ongoing operations.

The workshop was therefore timely and a successful initial step toward improving cross-sector communication and mutual understanding among key actors of Yemen's food system. The insights provided by the workshop participants and summarized in this brief offer up-to-date information and local knowledge that can be useful for planning and implementation of development programs aimed at ending the current food crisis and strengthening food system resilience. In the context of largely dysfunctional national data and statistics systems, with most data sources being both very outdated and of poor quality, this brief contributes to narrowing large information and knowledge gaps regarding key food security-related issues in Yemen.

Moreover, the workshop led to concrete plans for joint initiatives. For example, in a pilot program, HSA Group will partner with Tetra Pak to produce and distribute nutritionally fortified milk to schoolchildren in Yemen, intended to complement WFP's high-energy biscuit distribution program in targeted schools. IFPRI, in turn, under the CGIAR Research Initiative on Fragility, Conflict, and Migration, will evaluate the dietary and cognitive impacts of the milk distribution program, with the expectation that the study findings will help to improve the effectiveness of scale up of the intervention in a post-conflict Yemen.



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Photos: p. 1 HSA; p. 6 HSA; p. 7 HSA; p. 8 Olivier Ecker / IFPRI; p. 9 HSA; p. 11 HSA.

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