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## Do Remittances Affect Food Security among Farmers' Households? Evidence from Syria

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### Abstract

Since 2011, Syria has been going through a devastating conflict that destroyed large areas of the country, undermined the economy by taking away the means of living of Syrian population, and threatened the lives of thousands of people. This has led to an unprecedented massive displacement of the population seeking refuge in safer zones inside Syria or even abroad. The objective of this study is to analyse the effect of remittances sent to left behind households in maintaining acceptable level of food security.

Data was gathered in 2017 by a team of researchers from the National Agricultural Policy Centre in addition to local officials and agricultural extension agents. The survey covered 12 Syrian governorates, and 1381 households were interviewed using structured questionnaires. For the analysis of food security, we calculated the Food Consumption Score (FCS) suggested by World Food Programme (WFP); it measures food consumed by a household in the past seven days reflecting both quantity and quality of food. Then, households were classified according to a threshold set by WFP: poor ( $FCS < 21$ ), borderline ( $FCS$  between 21.5–35), or acceptable ( $FCS > 35$ ) level of food security. While for remittances we used their share of total household's income. We found that around ten percent of our sample households received remittances.

First, we looked if remittances influence the classification of household's level of food security. ANOVA test of variance proved that there are significant differences across households' categories as we tested the FCS categories against the remittances. We then tested the correlation between food security and remittances. The results indicate a significant yet negative correlation between the share of remittances and the FCS. This means that the higher the remittances sent back home the lower is the FCS and the more food-insecure the household is. This is logical given that food-insecure households are mostly less productive and in desperate need for help from external sources such as remittances.

We conclude that remittances are important to achieve food security in our sample. In the next step of this research, we will analyse the effect of remittances on food security using the regression model.

**Keywords:** Conflict, Food Security, migration, Remittances, Syria

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