



Background and Methodology

The main objective of this study was to assess the prevalence of women's food insecurity and explore the linkages with indicators of women's empowerment.

A survey was conducted on 575 women, selected by stratified cluster sampling, living in the governorate of Sidi Bouzid (Centre West region of Tunisia) in December 2015.

The questionnaire included three observation levels: the woman, her household and the related farm when relevant.

The Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS), based on 9 standardized questions related to feelings and changes in behavior regarding food insecurity, was adapted to the individual level and a food insecurity score (IFIAS) was calculated for each woman (score from 0 to 27).

GAILLARD Cedric¹, DURY Sandrine¹, BOSCH Pierre-Marie¹, EL ATI Jalila², DOP Marie-Claude³, MARTIN Sofyan, TRABELSI Tarek² and MEDINA Study Group

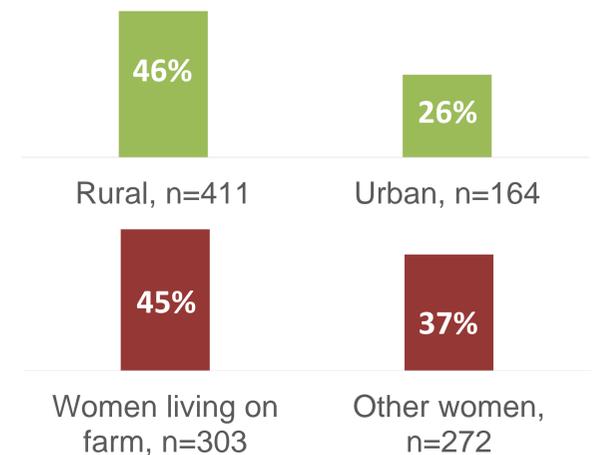
1. UMR MOISA, CIRAD, Montpellier, France
 2. INNTA (National Institute of Nutrition) & SURVEN (Nutrition Surveillance & Epidemiology) Research Laboratory, Tunis, Tunisia
 3. IRD (Institut de Recherche pour le Développement), UMR NUTRIPASS, IRD-UM-SupAgro, Montpellier, France

Results – Discussion

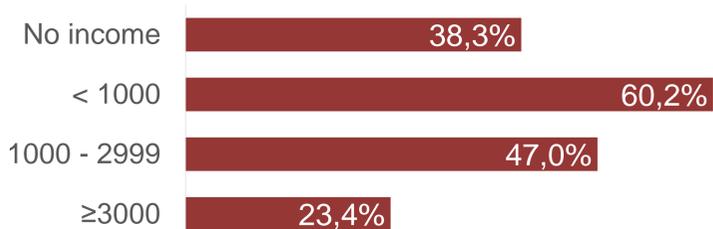
Food insecurity is unevenly distributed across the governorate

- 40% of women reported some form of food insecurity (IFIAS>0)
- In rural areas, the prevalence of food insecurity was significantly higher than in urban areas (46% vs 26%) (z-test with $p < 0.05$)
- By administrative delegation, clear differences appeared: Jelma delegation was seriously affected with two thirds of women considering themselves as food insecure; in Sidi Bouzid West delegation, this proportion was less than 25%
- The difference between women living on farms and the others was also significant (45% vs 37%, z-test with $p < 0.05$) but the deviation was lower (8 points) than those between rural and urban settings (20 points).

Graph 1: Prevalence of food insecurity



Graph 2 : Prevalence of food insecurity by class of women's income (dinar/year)



Women's Income: a complex relationship

- Women's income had a significant influence on the prevalence of their food insecurity. A surprising fact: women with no personal income were less food insecure than those earning an income (38% versus 47%, z-test with $p < 0,05$)
- The prevalence and level of insecurity decreased when their income exceeded the threshold of 1,000 dinars per year.

The contribution of women in the decision of income allocation had a positive impact on the most vulnerable households

- Adjusting for the level of women's control over their own income had no influence on the relationship between their income and food insecurity
- Among women with positive IFIAS, those taking part in household spending decisions had an IFIAS significantly lower than other women (4.0 [2.9-5.0] vs 5.2 [4,5-5,9], Mann-Whitney test with $p < 0.05$)
- These differences were further amplified when focusing the analysis to women with no income or low income (<3,000 dinars per year).



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CONCLUSION

40% of women of the governorate of Sidi Bouzid reported some form of food insecurity. This prevalence was higher for rural women and for those living on farm and decreased when they earned over 1000 dinars per year. When the most vulnerable women had more decision-making power on household expenditure and more personal income above 3000 dinars per year, insecurity was less severe.

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