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**КЫРГЫЗ РЕСПУБЛИКАСЫНДАГЫ АЗЫК-ТҮЛҮК КООПСУЗДУГУН
БААЛОО: УЧУРДАГЫ АБАЛЫ ЖАНА ЖЫЙЫНТЫКТАРЫ**

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**ОЦЕНКА ПРОДОВОЛЬСТВЕННОЙ БЕЗОПАСНОСТИ В КЫРГЫЗСКОЙ
РЕСПУБЛИКЕ: ТЕКУЩЕЕ СОСТОЯНИЕ И ВЫВОДЫ**

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**AN ASSESSMENT OF FOOD SECURITY IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC:
CURRENT STATUS AND IMPLICATIONS**

УДК: 338.4/338.43

Азык-түлүк коопсуздугунун проблемасы өзүнчө алынган өлкө, ошондой эле эл аралык коомчулук тарабынан көңүл бурууну жана чечүүнү талап кылган олуттуу маселе болуп саналат. Азык-түлүк коопсуздугу бардык адамдар үчүн каалаган убакта тамак-аштын жеткиликтүүлүгүн жана туруктуулугун билдирет. Бирок, көптөгөн өнүгүп келе жаткан өлкөлөр Бул максатты татаалдаштырган кыйынчылыктарга туш болушат. Берилген макалада азык-түлүк коопсуздугу маселелери, тактап айтканда, Кыргыз Республикасынын экономикалык өнүгүүсүнүн учурдагы абалына баа берүү жана азык-түлүк коопсуздугунун өнүгүү тенденцияларын аныктоочу факторлор каралат. Статистикалык маалыматтарды талдоонун негизинде азык-түлүк коопсуздугу айрым түшүнүктөр берилген – калктын орточо айлык кирешеси, жашоо минимуму, азык-түлүк себетинин наркы сыяктуу параметрлердин негизинде жүргүзүлгөн. Эмгекте калктын турмуш деңгээли менен азык-түлүк коопсуздугу тыгыз байланышта экендиги, анын чектик мааниси калкты тамак-аштын негизги түрлөрү боюнча азык-түлүк менен камсыз кылуунун чектик мааниси жана алардын запастарынын деңгээли болуп санала тургандыгы белгиленген.

Негизги сөздөр: жашоо минимуму, азык-түлүк коопсуздугу, керектөө корзинасы, азык-түлүк, импорт, экспорт, киреше, жашоо деңгээли, калк.

Проблема продовольственной безопасности является серьезным вызовом, которая требует внимания и решения со стороны как отдельно взятой страны, так и международного сообщества. Продовольственная безопасность означает доступность и устойчивость пищевых продуктов для всех людей в любое время. Однако многие развивающиеся страны сталкиваются с проблемами, затрудняющими достижение этой цели. В представленной статье рассмотрены вопросы продовольственной безопасности, а именно оценка современного состояния экономического развития Кыргызской Республики и факторы, определяющие тенденции развития продовольственной безопасности. Сделан анализ статистических данных на основе параметров, как среднемесячный доход на душу населения, среднемесячный прожиточный минимум и стоимость продовольственной корзины прожиточного минимума, которые являются базовыми понятиями в вопросе продовольственной безопасности. В работе приводится, что уровень жизни населения и продовольственная безопасность тесно связаны, лимитирующим значением которого является пороговое значение обеспечения продуктами питания населения по основным видам продовольствия и уровень их запасов.

Ключевые слова: прожиточный минимум, продовольственная безопасность, потребительская корзина, продукты питания, импорт, экспорт, доходы населения, уровень жизни, население.

The problem of food security is a serious challenge that requires attention and solutions from both a single country and the international community. Food security means the availability and sustainability of food for all people at all times. However, many developing countries face challenges that make it difficult to achieve this goal. The presented article examines issues of food security, namely an assessment of the current state of economic development of the Kyrgyz Republic and the factors determining trends in the development of food security. An analysis of statistical data was made based on parameters such as average monthly income per capita, average monthly living wage, and the cost of the subsistence minimum food basket (“market basket”), which are basic concepts in the issue of food security. The paper suggests that the standard of living of the population and food security are closely related, the limiting value of which is the threshold value of providing food to the population for the main types of food and the level of their reserves.

Key words: living wage, food security, consumer basket, food, import, export, income, standard of living, population.

The stability of a country's economic development and overall social mood are heavily reliant on the standard of living, quality of health, and satisfaction of basic life needs of its citizens. Therefore, the importance of food security remains relevant as it is directly dependent on the operating success of these factors [1].

The international term “food security” was first introduced into widespread use at the World Food Conference, organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome, in 1974 [2].

According to FAO of the United Nations, food security is a comprehensive concept existing “when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”

Food security can be broken down into four key dimensions, which are frequently described as the following pillars:

1. *Availability:* This pillar covers the consistent and sufficient availability of food, on both a national and global scale. It encompasses aspects such as agricultural productivity, food production, and distribution systems.

2. *Access:* The second pillar pertains to the economic and physical access of individuals and communities to the available food. It involves factors like income levels, employment opportunities, market access, and infrastructure.

3. *Utilization*: The third pillar relates to the ability of people to effectively use food to meet their nutritional needs. This includes considerations of food safety, hygiene, health services, and education on nutrition and food preparation.

4. *Stability*: The fourth pillar highlights the importance of stable access to food over time and the resilience of individuals and communities to shocks and fluctuations in food availability and prices. Having stability is crucial for long-term food security.

The meaning of the term remained unchangeable since its first introduction and can be described as a state of the economy that guarantees access to a sufficient amount of food for all citizens, at any time and in the quantity necessary for an active healthy life.

In order to provide the above needs of the population, as a general criterion of a country's food security, as a quantitative and qualitative threshold value of a certain attribute by which the food supply of its population is assessed, the level of self-sufficiency of the country with basic types of food and the level of their transferable products are considered throughout the world reserves amounting to 15-20% of annual consumption [3].

At the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), global leaders reaffirmed the right of every individual to have access to safe and nutritious food, in line with the right to adequate food and the basic right of every person to be free from hunger. Rio+20 introduced the UN Secretary-General's Zero Hunger Agenda, urging governments, civil society, faith-based communities, the private sector, and research institutions to work together to eradicate hunger and eliminate the worst forms of malnutrition.

Since its introduction, the Zero Hunger initiative has gained widespread support from various Member States and organizations. The initiative aims to achieve the following goals:

- Eliminating growth retardation in children under two years of age entirely.
- Ensuring universal access to adequate food throughout the year.
- Establishing sustainable food production systems.
- Increasing smallholder farmers' productivity and income by 100%.
- Eliminating all food loss and waste.

Sustainable Development Goal 2 aims to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture. It recognizes the interconnectivity between supporting sustainable agriculture, empowering smallholder farmers, promoting gender equality, ending rural poverty, promoting healthy lives, combating climate change, and other issues addressed by the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in the post-2015 development agenda [4].

As part of efforts to achieve the SDGs, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres convened the Food Systems

Summit in September 2021 in New York. The event launched new actions aimed at achieving progress across all 17 SDGs, all of which depend to some extent on sustainable and equitable food systems.

Data from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that around 2.3 billion people are currently experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity worldwide. In Asia, this accounts for roughly 25% or 566 million people [4].

Central Asia is a region that is experiencing rapid growth, with a high population growth rate. According to the 2022 census, Kyrgyzstan currently has a population of 6,261,400 people. By 2025, the expected growth rate is 5.92%, which is the highest since 1951. After 2025, the rate of growth is expected to decline. These predictions are based on data from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, as compiled by the online service CountryMeters [5].

The National Program for the Development of Food Security of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2019-2023 emphasizes the obligation to ensure the development of food security at the present and future stages [6]. However, we think, it could be possible only if an accurate assessment of food security at the present stage takes place. To be able to assess this variable, it is necessary to make a statistical analysis of available data used to determine the economic accessibility of food.

By economic accessibility of food, we understand the accessibility for all consumers at a price, regardless of social status and place of residence, which is one of the key factors in ensuring food security in the republic [7].

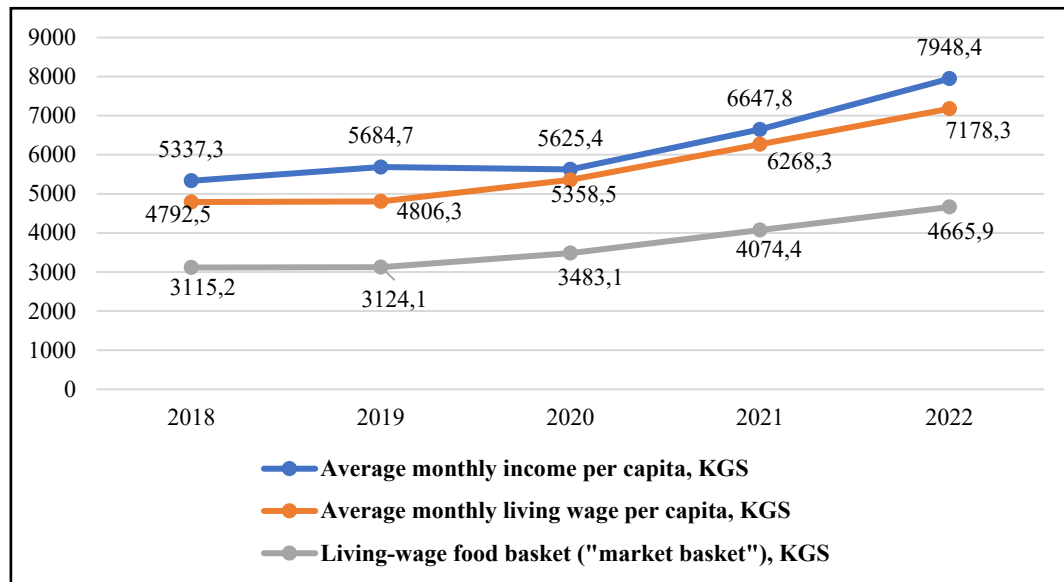
The standard of living of the population of the country and food security are closely related and represent important aspects of ensuring the overall well-being of society. A number of factors considered to be "standard of living" variables that also determine the current state of food security include average monthly income per capita, average monthly living wage, and the cost of the living-wage food basket ("market basket").

An essential aspect of formulating comprehensive strategies for sustainable and resilient food security in the Kyrgyz Republic is the recognition and understanding of pertinent variables. These strategies should not only address immediate challenges but also pave the way for long-term objectives outlined in the National Program. The synergy between economic accessibility, standard of living, and food security emerges as a focal point in this pursuit. Therefore, it is paramount to comprehend and synthesize the interplay between these factors to achieve the desired outcomes.

The data illustrated in Fig. 1, shows that in general, there is a noticeable upward trend in average monthly income per capita from 5,337 KGS in 2018 to 7,948 KGS in 2022, indicating a general improvement in the financial situation of citizens over the years. Likewise, the average monthly living wage per capita also shows a growing

tendency from 4,792 KGS in 2018 to 7,178 KGS in 2022. This implies an improvement in the standard of living and basic needs of the population, however, the cost of a market basket, which is an important component of assessing

food security, also showed a growing trend from 3115.2 KGS in 2018 to 4665.9 KGS in 2022, this indicates the higher prices people are required to spend to be able to meet basic food and nutrition needs.



Source: composed by the authors with the provided data [7, 8].

Fig.1. Dynamics of living standard variables across the years 2018-2022.

Despite the positive dynamics in income levels and living standards, the disproportionate increase in costs of a market basket indicates potential problems in ensuring food security for all segments of the population, especially sensitive groups (ex.: people with lower incomes). This variable is a clear indicator of rising food price inflation.

Table 1

The living wage structure approved by the government of Kyrgyz Republic

Name	Per capita	Working-age population	Of which		Pensioners	Children	of which aged		
			men	women			under 7	7-14	after 14
Food products	65	61	61	61	70	71	71	72	71
Non-food products	16	17	17	17	10	16	15	16	18
Services	17	19	19	19	20	13	14	12	11
Taxes	2	3	3	3					

Source: composed by the authors with the provided data [8, 9].

In accordance with the law on a structure of the living wage, approved by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 694 of November 5, 2009, as is shown on Tab. 1, the share of food products in it is 65 percent, non-food products - 16 percent, services - 17 percent, and taxes - 2 percent. The government of Kyrgyzstan approved nutrition standards for Kyrgyz citizens in 2009;

according to the document, every resident of the country must consume 9 types of food products monthly: baked goods – 9 kilograms, meat – 5 kilograms, potatoes – 8.2 kilograms, vegetables – 9 kilograms, fruits and berries – 10 kilograms, sugar – 2 kilograms, milk – 17 liters, vegetable oil – 1 liter, eggs – 4 pieces, fish and fish products – 100 grams, tea – 200 grams [9].

Table 2

The comparison of market basket prices over the years 2018-2022

Period	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of persons					
The cost of a market basket per week, KGS					
«Family» – 4 persons	3872.5	4450.5	4912	5500.5	6682.5
1 person	968.1	1112.6	1228	1375.1	1670.6
The cost of a market basket per month, KGS					
1 person	968.1*4 weeks	1112.6*4 weeks	1228*4 weeks	1375.1*4 weeks	1670.6*4 weeks

Source: composed by the authors with the provided data [10].

Since 2018, “24.kg” New Agency reporters have been conducting a weekly analysis of prices of market basket goods established by the government, taking a family of four and large metropolitan supermarkets as a basis, with the purpose of proving an assessment of the real cost of living for Kyrgyz citizens [10].

The data shown on Tab.2, presents the insights of costs of a market basket over the years (2018-2022). For instance, at the end of 2019, the cost of a monthly market basket per person was 4450.5 KGS (compared to 3872.5 KGS at the end of 2018). In 2020, this number amounted to 4 912 KGS drawing a growing trend of 462 KGS compared to 2019. In 2022, the basket increased in price by 1182 KGS compared to 2021 (5500.5 KGSs), amounting to 6682.5 KGS.

The data shows that the cost of the market basket has grown by 2810 KGS, or by 72.5% for a selected time period (2018-2022), which indicates an increase in food prices due to inflation. According to the National Statistics Committee, the inflation rate in the Kyrgyz Republic reached up to 15.5% in 2022 [8].

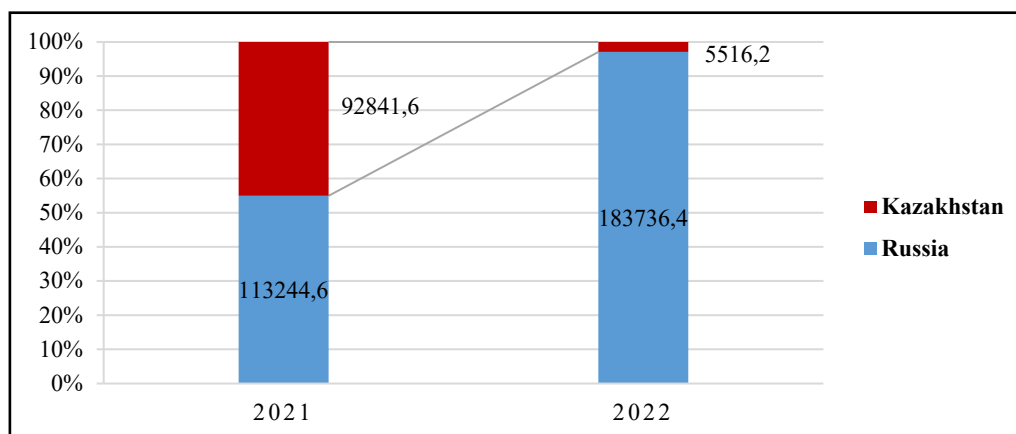
The high cost of food is also explained by the fact that the Kyrgyz Republic as an agricultural country, is still dependent on imports: out of 9 socially important food products, the country can provide itself with only three –

potatoes, other vegetables, and milk. 70% of bakery products, fruits, sugar, vegetable oil, meat, and eggs are imported from abroad, mainly from Russia and Kazakhstan.

In 2022, according to the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, the price growth was the most noticed in flour and sugar – 27-29%, other price increases include: eggs – 11%, beef, lamb, and horse meat – 13%, wheat and bread – 15%, milk – 17% [8].

Grains, including wheat, are imported into the Kyrgyz Republic mainly from Kazakhstan and Russia. As shown in Fig. 2, previously, the share of both these countries in supplies was almost the same, that is, 55% - Russia and 45% – Kazakhstan. But in 2022, the numbers changed dramatically, amounting to the shares of 97% (Russia) and 3% (Kazakhstan) [11]. The republic imported a total of 189.2 thousand tons of wheat: in 2021 it amounted to 207 thousand tons, a decreasing trend of 9% in 2022. Compared to 2021, imports from Russia increased by 62% amounting to 183.7 thousand tons; the share of Kazakhstan decreased by 94% or 5.5 thousand tons.

Imports of legumes (peas) from Russia increased by 94% (64 thousand tons) compared to 2021, eggs by 2.5 times (63.5 million pieces), processed potatoes by 74% (4.5 thousand tons), oranges, tomatoes and apple jam - by 60% (2.1 thousand tons) [11].



Source: composed by the authors with the provided data [11].

Fig. 2. Import share of wheat suppliers in the years 2021-2022.

Discrepancies between official data and independent research data indicate a possible inaccuracy in assessing the true state of food security at a current stage. If the actual cost of the market basket is higher than officially reported, this results in a bigger financial burden on the ability of individuals and/or households to purchase basic food items. If this condition is true, it suggests that more individuals and/or households may be struggling to afford adequate nutrition.

In conclusion, the comprehensive analysis conducted to evaluate the current state of food security in the Kyrgyz Republic highlights the importance of accurate data collection and assessment. Precise data forms the cornerstone for identifying vulnerabilities and crafting strategies that can robustly elevate food security practices at an institutional level. It is essential to have a more nuanced and accurate comprehension of the actual cost of the market basket to design and implement effective policies and programs. To mitigate the risks of a potential food crisis in the region, it is imperative for the government to establish regulatory measures to control price increases while ensuring the availability of essential food products. Furthermore, an efficient program should be developed and implemented to attract modern technologies that optimize resource utilization and increase production, ultimately leading to the country's food independence.

This is particularly crucial in addressing the nuanced challenges associated with food security and providing targeted support to vulnerable groups facing heightened economic strain. Policymakers can ensure that interventions are tailored to the specific needs of the population by acknowledging and rectifying discrepancies in data.

To mitigate the risks of a potential food crisis in the region, it is imperative for the government to establish regulatory measures to control price increases while ensu-

ring the availability of essential food products. Furthermore, an efficient program should be developed and implemented to attract modern technologies that optimize resource utilization and increase production, ultimately leading to the country's food independence.

By prioritizing these values, the country can take significant strides in ensuring that its citizens have access to adequate and sustainable food sources and advancing the food security goals in the Kyrgyz Republic.

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