In southern Syria, insecurity increased in the first few months of 2019, particularly in Dara’a governorate, where violence resulted in deaths, looting and other security incidents, displacing unknown numbers of people. Access to basic services, including health facilities, electricity and WASH, was difficult. The agricultural sector was highly affected (OCHA, August 2019).

Mass displacement of rural Syrians has had a particularly negative impact on the agricultural industry with equipment losses and damages to irrigation, roads and energy infrastructure, which is particularly troubling since the sector contributes to a substantial share of the country’s GDP (FAO, 2019).

Regardless of insecurity, almost 91 000 former refugees returned home during 2019, an increase of 60 percent compared to 2018 (3RP, January 2020).

**Economic shocks**

Around 80 percent of Syrians depend on markets for food (CFSAM, September 2019). The relative improvements in security opened up some important trade routes that had been unusable since 2013. However, the economy remains troubled and around 70 percent of Syrians mentioned unemployment as their main problem (WFP, 2019).

Post-harvest losses, increased fuel prices and the depreciated Syrian pound (down by 18.4 percent against the USD between January 2019 and 2020 (WFP, January 2020) led to higher food prices across all 14 governorates (CFSAM, September 2019).

By November, the reference food basket price had increased by 11 percent compared to the previous month and by 21 percent compared to November 2018. The increase was highest in Al-Hasakeh governorate at 51 percent (WFP, November 2019).

Even though more land was cultivated than in 2018, wheat harvested areas were still 25 percent below the pre-crisis average. Farmers continued to face challenges with high production and transportation costs, as well as limited quality inputs. Fruit and vegetable production was challenged by low purchasing power of consumers, the inability to export produce and shortage of domestic processing (FAO-GIEWS, September 2019).

For the 2018/19 season, agricultural prospects were positive as a result of favourable weather conditions and displaced farming households returning home. Wheat and barley planted areas increased by 23 percent in one year and 93 percent of the planted areas were harvested, compared to 59 percent the previous year. Barley production exceeded pre-crisis levels, but wheat production was still far below and import requirements were almost 1.8 million tonnes (CFSAM, September 2019).

**Weather extremes**

Hasakeh governorate faced the worst flooding in a decade following heavy rains in March, affecting around 118 000 people, including IDPs (IFRC, April 2019). The rains increased yields, but high temperatures and strong winds caused fires on standing crops before the May/June harvest (CFSAM, September 2019).