



Iraq COVID-19 Food Security Monitor

Weekly Update - Issue 12

7 July 2020

I. Key Messages

- By July 4th, the government received 4.3 million tons of wheat at collection centers nationwide.**
- The Plant Protection Directorate (PPD) is prioritizing control campaigns against seasonal date palms pests, such as Rot Disease Palm Pollens and Blight Rachis (Leaf Blight).**
- On June 29th, WFP mVAM data estimated 8.3% respondents, roughly 3.25 million people, had insufficient food consumption in the past week.**

II. Overview

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continued to spread in the country. As of July 5, 2020, the World Health Organization reported 58,354 cases in Iraq, with 2,368 deaths. The government continues to enforce lockdown and curfew measures in an attempt to curtail transmission. Oil prices also continued to be monitored closely. Basrah light and heavy oil, remained relatively stable in the last week, respectively at USD 46.33 and USD 45.33 per barrel. Prices have partially recovered since April and May 2020; however, they have not returned to 2019 levels. On July 8, 2019, the price of Basrah light was USD 65.27 per barrel and Basrah heavy was USD 61.81 per barrel, respectively a 29% and 27% decline compared to 2019 prices (Figure 1).¹ The Ministry of Planning Central Bureau of Statistics announced that during the first quarter of 2020, Iraq exported an average of 3.8 million barrels per day with an av-

erage price of USD 45.9 per barrel. Additionally, oil revenues accounted for 38.2% of the GDP (at current prices) during the first quarter of the year.²

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Bank continue to track the impact of this crisis on food security, with a focus on food availability, access, utilization and stability.

III. Food Supply: Production (primarily on farm)

Production. From April 20th to July 4th, the General Company for Grain Trade Marketing Department received roughly 4.3 million tons of wheat at government collection centers across the country, with approximately 90% of the wheat classified as high quality, first grade product. Wheat purchases at the government silos in Erbil, Sulaimaniyah and Dohuk proceeded as planned, with no major delays during unloading. The Ministry of Trade continues to take measures in order to address the complaints and challenges shared by citizens and farmers.

The Diwaniyah Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives requested and received government approval to add 1,500 ha of rice to the governorate's agriculture plan for summer crops, bringing the total area of paddy cultivation to 36,187 ha. Rice productivity depends on the variety and farm management; however, the common rice variety produced in Iraq (*A'anbar*) has an average yield of 3.2 tons per ha. Therefore, Diwaniyah will have an additional production of roughly 4,800 tons. 90% of all the crops under cultivation in Diwaniyah require irrigation, which is higher than last year.³

In a July 5th meeting with general managers, the Minister of Water Resources reiterated the importance of ensuring that farmers adhere to the Ministry of Agriculture's national plan to sustainably use limited water resources. The Ministry's Supreme Judicial Council will hold individuals who expand without approval liable. The water resource managers reports will be essential to enforce the plan, thus ensuring sufficient and equitable water delivery for drinking, irrigation and the marshlands. In order to ensure efficient water delivery in Baghdad, Najaf and Karbala governorates, regular maintenance and monitoring of irrigation canals was ongoing.⁴

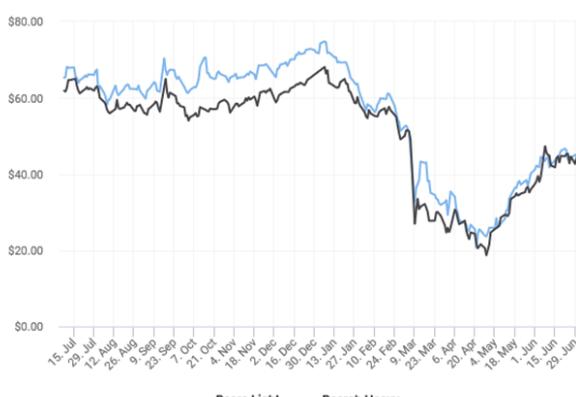


Figure 1. Basra light and heavy oil prices per barrel over one year.¹

¹ Oil Price Charts. June 28, 2020. Accessed on June 29, 2020. <https://oilprice.com/oil-price-charts>

² Face Iraq. July 5, 2020. Accessed on July 5, 2020. <https://www.faceiraq.org/inews.php?id=7771352>

³ Al Mirbad. July 5, 2020. Accessed on July 5, 2020. <https://www.almirbad.com/detail/56375>

⁴ Ministry of Water Resources. July 5, 2020. Accessed on July 5, 2020. <https://ar-ar.facebook.com/waterresources2/>

⁵ Government of Iraq. July 2, 2020. Accessed on July 5, 2020. <http://www.cabinet.iq/ArticleShow.aspx?ID=9651>

Government of Iraq (GoI) Announcements

Date	Government Decision
July 2, 2020	The Council of Ministers allocated approximately USD 42 million to the Ministry of Health from the emergency reserve to support the COVID-19 response. ⁵

Other Challenges. The Plant Protection Directorate (PPD) is prioritizing control campaigns against regular, seasonal date palms pests, focusing on two common fungal diseases that arise in autumn: Rot Disease Palm Pollens (RDPP) and Blight Rachis (also known as Leaf Blight). PPD will distribute equipment and pesticides to control these two fungal diseases, in addition to the Dubas bug. Nationwide control operations against Al Humara (Less Date Moth) and dust mites continued, while Red Palm Weevil control operations in Basra.

Campaigns against Tomato Leafminers continued across the country, while Peach and Jasmine fly control campaigns only continued in governorates where infestations were highest, including Karbala, Najaf, Babel, Baghdad, Diyala, Salah Al Din and Wassit. The campaigns against rodent populations in Najaf and Diwaniyah continued, but operations appeared to have successfully reduced the population.

MoA and PPD highlighted concerns about lack of aviation capacity to implement the control campaigns; helicopters require maintenance, pilots need training and funding is lacking. Aerial spraying is an important control campaign measure, particularly for Date Palm Pests and Desert Locusts.

IV. Food Demand (markets to consumers)

Prices. Compared to the last week of June, national average prices of basic food commodities remained relatively stable during the first week of July. On average, rice prices increased 3% and vegetable oil price rose 2%. These increases in the week-to-week prices were due to changes in Erbil, Thi-Qar and Salah Al Din governorates. In Erbil, rice prices increased 50% (IQD 1,000 to 1,500 per kg), and in Thi-Qar by 17% (IQD 1,500 to 1,750 per kg). The price of vegetable oil was stable in all governorates except for Salah Al Din, where prices rose 33% (IQD 1,500 to 2,000 IQD).

Vegetable prices continued to fluctuate. Potato prices increased from IQD 500 to 750 per kg in Erbil, Salah Al Din and Thi-Qar, but decreased in Basrah, Wasit and Duhok (IQD 750 to 500 per kg). The price of tomatoes increased 100% in Baghdad (IQD 250 to 500 p/kg) and 67% in Kirkuk (IQD 300 to 500 per kg); however, tomato prices decreased 50% in Erbil (IQD 500 to 250 per kg) and Wasit (IQD 1,000 to 500 per kg). In Erbil, there have been reports of farmers disposing their products in public acts of protest due to prices, particularly tomato farmers. The Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) does have tariffs on imported tomatoes; however, local producers are still unable to compete. In response, the Governor of Erbil has stated that the government will restart a tomato processing plant in Harir, where farmers will be able to sell their product.⁶

Consumption Patterns. On June 29th, WFP mVAM data estimated that around 8.3% respondents, which represented 3.25 million people in Iraq, did not have sufficient food consumption. Compared to last week, this is an increase of 286,000 people. These estimates were based on a statistically significant sample. On a monthly basis, 1,620 households were interviewed via the telephone. Al Muthanna (21%) and Ninewa (17%) governorates had the highest prevalence of people with insufficient food consumption (Figure 2). Additionally, 14.8 % people reported using negative food-based coping strategies.

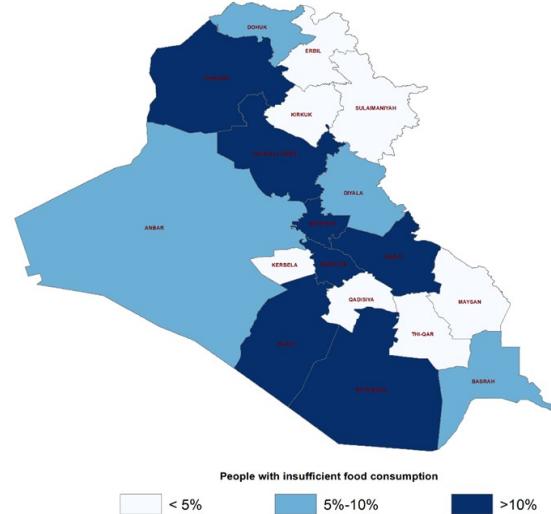


Figure 2. Distribution of people with insufficient food consumption. Where insufficient consumption refers to those with poor and borderline food consumption according to Food Consumption Score (FCS) using a seven-day recall (Source: WFP).

The most commonly adopted strategy was ‘relying on less expensive food’; 31.3% of respondents that reported using negative coping strategies employed this strategy.

Around 2.1 million households reported challenges accessing markets, an increase of 80,000 people compared to last week. Households reporting issues accessing health facilities increased by 30,000 people compared to last week, thus totaling 32.1% of respondents.

V. Food Supply Chain for Vulnerable Populations

UN/NGO Response. According to the NGO Directorate, between May 25th to June 15th 102,925 individuals received food assistance across the country.⁷

In the last two months, WFP increased its food assistance in camps by including an additional 33,000 refugees and IDPs whose food security situation has changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, WFP is providing monthly food assistance to 337,000 IDPs and refugees in the formal camps across the country. Several COVID-19 cases were reported in the internally displaced people (IDP) and refugee camps supported by WFP. With support from the Clusters, the general population in affected camp populations were tested, while new arrivals, infected individuals and their families were quarantined in their tents/caravans, a separate section of the camps or hospitals in severe cases. WFP is developing guidance on how to provide food assistance in the event of quarantines.

The World Bank has provided a five-year, USD 300 million loan to the Social Fund for Development (SFD) that will have nationwide coverage, but will initially focus on Al Muthanna, Salah Al Din and Dohuk. The Government of Iraq had embarked on a comprehensive social protection reform, as outlined in the Social Protection Strategic Roadmap (2015-2019), which introduced significant improvements to the existing system by promoting equity, resilience and opportunities for the Iraqi people. The SFD objectives aim build upon that work (i) to improve access to basic services; and (ii) to increase short-term employment opportunities, in targeted communities.

⁶ Face Iraq, July 7, 2020. Accessed on July 7, 2020. <https://www.faceiraq.org/inews.php?id=7774585>

⁷ NGO Directorate. Issue 9. Accessed on July 7, 2020. <http://ngoad.gov.iq/uploads/DOC/9th.pdf>