



## Government of Iraq (GoI) Announcements

Date	Government Decision
June 6, 2020	Parliament approved the appointments for the vacant Minister positions, which included the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Trade.
June 7, 2020	Supreme Committee for Health and National Safety extended the curfew until June 13th. <sup>1</sup>

## Iraq COVID-19 Food Security Monitor

Weekly Update - Issue 8

9 June 2020

### I. Key Messages

- **Wheat harvesting is underway in the north, yet the government silos are not yet receiving deliveries in Erbil, Dohuk or Sulaimaniyah.**
- **The Ministry of Water Resources has resumed discussions with neighboring countries on transboundary water management, focusing on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.**
- **According to WFP, approximately 5.7% of the population (2.2 million people) reported insufficient food consumption this week.**

### II. Overview

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to affect the world, including Iraq. As of June 9, 2020, the World Health Organization reported 14,268 cases in Iraq, with 392 deaths. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) 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.

Parliament approved the suggested Minister appointments in a vote on June 6, 2020, thus filling the remaining vacancies.

### III. Food Supply: Production (primarily on farm)

**Production.** Wheat harvesting is ongoing in the north, and yields are high. However, the Ministry of Trade silos are not yet receiving deliveries in Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaimaniyah. Thus, farmers are currently selling their harvest on the local market at unsubsidized prices that range from 300,000 to 350,000 IQD per ton, compared to IQD 420,000 to IQD 560,000 offered at the government silos.

Marketing of wheat and other strategic crops was discussed during a meeting between the Ministers of Water Resources, Agriculture and Trade, in addition to discussing the need to provide farmers with the inputs and services required to sustain production.<sup>2</sup> This season, the General Company for Grain Trade has reported wheat quality issues, particularly impurities (i.e. bushes and weeds). During future harvests, the MoA and other concerned stakeholders will form teams to inspect

wheat fields to assess the prevalence of weeds and bushes – the government will use that information to either accept or refuse a delivery when farmers bring their harvest to the marketing centers, in alignment with the specifications outlined by the Ministry of Commerce. Farmers will have an opportunity to rectify any issues during the week after the report is issued.<sup>3</sup>

In preparation for the 2020/21 wheat and barley season, the Plant Protection Directorate (PPD) in the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) distributed 350 metric tons of pesticides against smut fungal diseases to government seed companies. Smut is a fungal disease that enters the embryos or seedling plants and, as the plant matures, causes blisters and masses on various parts of the plant. The seed companies will use the pesticides to treat wheat and barley seeds for the next cropping season. Distribution of the treated seeds will occur by October 2020.

The Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR) announced that it would resume negotiations with neighboring countries on transboundary water management, focusing on Turkey and the Alyso Dam. The MoWR remained committed to its summer agricultural plan, particularly irrigation for summer rice and the first round of irrigation for winter wheat production. In addition to surface water management, MoWR stated that it would conduct a study on the economic feasibility of groundwater abstraction in the western desert to inform the MoWR's 2035 roadmap.<sup>4</sup>

**Other Challenges.** From April 21 to June 8, 2020, the Civil Defense Directorate reported 256 fires, with 2,908 ha of cropland burned and 47,605 ha rescued. The cause of field fires varied, but included power cord failure (78 fires), spark from a harvester (39), cigarette butts (22) and terrorist acts (11), among others.

Dubas bug, Humara pest (Lesser Date Moth), Red Palm Weevil and dust mites outbreaks continued to affect date palm production. Aerial control campaigns in Karbala and Wassit treated 4,000 ha and 2,000 ha respectively. The two available helicopters have begun control campaigns in Babel and Diala this

<sup>1</sup>Supreme Committee for Health and National Safety. June 7, 2020. Accessed on June 8, 2020. <https://gds.gov.iq/ar/covid-19-higher-committee-for-health-and-national-safety-extends-nationwide-curfew/>

<sup>2</sup>Face Iraq. June 7, 2929. Accessed on June 8, 2020. <https://www.faceiraq.org/inews.php?id=7736630>

<sup>3</sup>Ministry of Agriculture. June 3, 2020. Accessed on June 7, 2020. <http://www.zerqa.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=8473>

<sup>4</sup>Al Sumaria. June 1, 2020. Accessed on June 7, 2020. <https://www.alsumaria.tv/news/>

week, which will then continue in Najaf. The Al Humara pest, Red Palm Weevil and dust mite control operations are underway. Desert Locust and Sunn pest control operations ceased this week. The Plant Protection Directorate (PPD) aims to publish a report on the impact of Desert Locust on harvest shortly. The PPD has also responded to a spike in rodent populations in Najaf and Diwania. In collaboration with the Agriculture Plant Directorate of Najaf and Diwania, PPD distributed pesticides and information to farmers to control the rodent outbreak.

#### IV. Food Supply: Markets (farm gate to markets)

**Markets.** The Ministry of Oil has reconfirmed its adherence to the OPEC+ production cut agreements.<sup>5</sup> Basrah heavy oil prices rose from \$37.44 USD per barrel on June 1<sup>st</sup> to \$39.31 USD per barrel on June 5<sup>th</sup>, while Basrah light oil prices rose from \$41.19 to \$44.51 USD in the same time period.<sup>6</sup> Prices appear to be steadily increasing, but have still not recovered to 2019 levels.

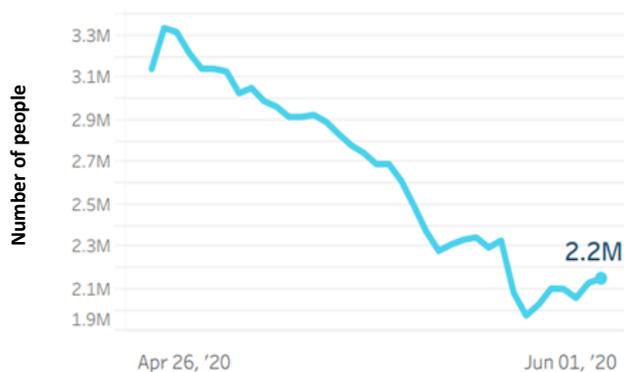
**Food Reserves.** For the upcoming Public Distribution cycle, wheat flour distributions are expected to be consistent throughout 2020 due to the successful 2019/2020 local wheat harvests. For rice, the Ministry of Trade has 190,000 tons of rice for coming Public Distribution System (PDS) cycles; the monthly requirements is 100,000 tons per cycle. Oil and sugar stocks remain limited and will only be distributed to the most vulnerable families registered under MoLSA social safety net programs.

Companies contracted to import commodities for the PDS continued to operate, while new contracts await availability of funds once the budget is approved by Parliament. The Council of Ministers will present the budget proposal by June 30th for the Parliament to review and endorse.

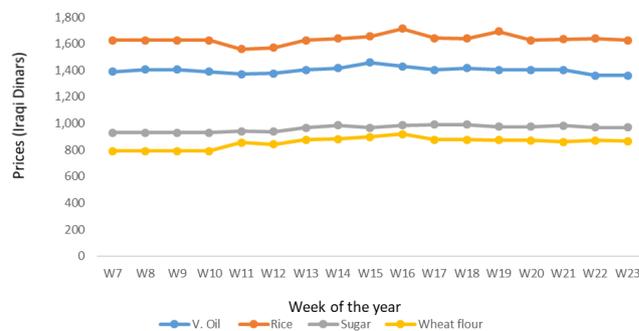
The new Minister of Trade has already met with the new Minister of Agriculture and other stakeholders to explore solutions to farmers' challenges. The Minister of Trade also reiterated commitment to improve the PDS distribution system, by addressing gaps, identifying opportunities and securing the required resources to contract suppliers.

#### V. Food Demand (markets to consumers)

**Prices.** Similar to the last three weeks, basic commodity prices did not witness major changes nationwide, with only a



**Figure 1.** Number 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).



**Figure 2.** Weekly food prices (national averages) for four staple commodities during the COVID-19 crisis (Source: WFP).

slight decrease (1%) in rice and wheat prices. This decrease was driven by prices in Duhok (20%) and Sulaimaniyah (4%). There is price variation between governorates for staple commodities. Sugar prices increased 33% in Diyala (750 to 1,000 IQD per kg), but decreased 20% in Sulaimaniyah (1,250 to 1,000 IQD per kg). Vegetable oil prices increased in Salah Al Din by 20% (1,250 to 1,500 IQD per liter), and decreased by the same percent in Qadisiyah (1,500 to 1,250 IQD per liter).

**Consumption Patterns.** As the Ramadan and Eid festivities concluded, the number of people with insufficient food consumption started to increase according to WFP mVAM data. During Ramadan, consumption patterns generally improve as various religious charities, known as *zakat*, help improve food consumption and access; however, the number returns to the actual level in the following months. Thus, people with poor food consumption scores (FCS) are expected to increase in the coming months. Around 5.7% of the population (2.2 million) reported insufficient consumption as of June 9th compared to 5.5% reported last week. Additionally, 12% of the total respondents used negative coping strategies and the most common strategy was "relying on less expensive food". Moreover, 28.6% of total respondents reported challenges accessing markets and a similar percent (28.8%) reported challenges accessing health facilities, primarily due to movement restrictions. The analysis was based on a sample size of 1,622 household responses, representative at the governorate level.

#### VI. Food Supply Chain for Vulnerable Populations

**UN/NGO Response.** In June 2020, WFP and partners continued to increase assistance to vulnerable IDPs and refugees affected by COVID-19, reaching up to 33,000 new refugees and IDPs residing in the formal camps. This is in addition to continuing the assistance for more than 305,000 IDPs and refugees. WFP sub-offices are planning the June distributions for IDP camps with the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD) branches to complement MoMD food rations by providing a "top-up" of 11,000 IQD per person. MoMD distributions have been confirmed for Duhok, Erbil, and Ninewa governorates, while planning is underway for other locations. In the camps that are not covered by government assistance, WFP will provide a full ration (17,000 IQD per person).

The NGO Directorate under the Minister's Council General Secretariat reported that between May 12<sup>th</sup> and May 25<sup>th</sup>, non-governmental organizations and other local charities reached 135,564 beneficiaries with food assistance.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Middle East Monitor. June 6, 2020. Accessed on June 8, 2020. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200606-iraq-confirms-full-compliance-with-crude-oil-production-cuts/>

<sup>6</sup> Oil Price Charts. May 30, 2020. Accessed on May 31, 2020. <https://oilprice.com/oil-price-charts>

<sup>7</sup> NGO Directorate of the Minister's Council General Secretariat. Issue 8. Accessed on June 7, 2020. [http://www.ngoao.gov.iq/uploads/DOC/8\\_9th.pdf](http://www.ngoao.gov.iq/uploads/DOC/8_9th.pdf)