



Government of Iraq (GoI) Announcements

Date	Government Decision
14 August 2020	The Iraqi Cabinet agreed to send 13,000 tons of wheat grain to Lebanon following the explosion in Beirut. ¹
23 August 2020	The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) announced that inter-governorate travel between Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaimaniyah governorates is now allowed in accordance with Decree No. 48 (2020) after it was banned since the beginning of COVID-19 lockdowns.

Iraq COVID-19 Food Security Monitor

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I. Key Messages

- The Ministries of Agriculture and Trade announced the end of the 2020 wheat marketing season, with an estimated 5.1 million tons of wheat now stored in the government silos.
- On 17 August, the WFP Hunger Monitoring System revealed that around 8.1% of households, representing 3.1 million people, did not have sufficient food consumption during the third week of August, an increase of 400,000 people compared to the first week of August, but still below the peak of roughly 3.5 million people in mid-July.
- The Plant Protection Directorate has begun a new control operation against the Corn Stalk Borer, a maize pest.

II. Overview

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has continued to affect Iraq. As of 24 August 2020, the World Health Organization reported 204,341 cases and 6,428 deaths, a roughly 40% increase compared to 27 July.² Although movement restrictions eased and the country emerged from strict curfews, the Iraqi government and KRG continue to enforce measures to prevent the spread of the virus, such as mandating that citizens wear face masks outside, or risk an IQD 20,000 fine, and maintain physical distance.

The global economic slowdown associated with pandemic containment measures decreased the demand for oil and lowered prices, with consequences for oil exporting countries. In Iraq, oil revenue accounts for 90% of the government budget and developments in oil prices have a significant impact on country's finances. Over the past two weeks, Basra heavy oil prices have remained stable, fluctuating between USD 45 and USD 46 per barrel, up from minimum of USD 18.7 per barrel reached in April 2020, but well below USD 56.5 per barrel, the price recorded one year ago. According to World Bank estimates, Iraq would need at least a US\$58/barrel oil price to meet its wage and pension obligations alone.

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. The Ministries of Agriculture and Trade have announced the end of the 2020 wheat marketing season. The government silos accepted roughly 5.1 million tons of wheat, approximately 0.5 million tons more than last year. Similar to previous years, the top four wheat producing governorates were Ninewa, Salah Al Din, Wassit and Kirkuk.⁴ The Ministry of Trade (MoT) began a campaign to cover and fumigate the wheat in the government silos before the start of the rainy season to minimize post-harvest losses.⁵ The MoT also confirmed that this wheat will be delivered through the Public Distribution System (PDS).⁶

III. Food Supply: Production (primarily on farm)

The General Mesopotamia Seed Company, a MoA company, announced plans to disburse funds to farmers who marketed their yellow maize to the government in the 2019-2020 agricultural season.⁷ This month, the MoA hosted a meeting for date producers, exporters and investors to discuss advancing the date palm sector, identifying date palm as strategic crop for the country. The government urged stakeholders to invest in improving the supply chain, including better packaging and advanced marketing methods, and affirmed that the government would support the export of surplus dates.⁸

The Directorate of Water Resources in Anbar, Maysan, Karbala, Diyala, Thi Qar, Ninewah and Salah Al Din continued to prevent unsanctioned water extraction (i.e. users without water permits or use of unofficial pipes) and the construction of parks, homes and other facilities along the banks of the rivers. In Maysan, the Directorate also worked to remove 32 illegal manmade lakes that siphon water off Al Hasji River, an important water source that feeds the eastern marshes. In Karbala, Najaf, Maysan and Diyala the respective Directorates of Water Resources continued to mechanically remove sediments and weeds from the rivers and streams, including Umm Tararid stream, Ayyuj stream, Al Shaher River and Bani Saad, to improve irrigation efficiency.⁹

¹ Reuters. August 14, 2020. Accessed on August 24, 2020. <https://www.agriculture.com/markets/news/wire/iraq-cabinet-to-send-around-13000-tonnes-of-wheat-in-aid-to-lebanon>

² WHO COVID-19 Dashboard. Accessed on August 25, 2020. <https://covid19.who.int/region/emro/country/iq>

³ Oil Price Charts. Accessed on August 25, 2020. <https://oilprice.com/oil-price-charts>

⁴ Ministry of Trade. August 17, 2020. Accessed on August 24, 2020. <http://mot.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=5723>

⁵ Ministry of Trade. August 23, 2020. Accessed on August 23, 2020. <http://mot.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=5728>

⁶ Ministry of Trade. August 23, 2020. Accessed on August 23, 2020. <http://mot.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=5724>

⁷ Ministry of Agriculture. August 17, 2020. Accessed on August 23, 2020. <http://www.zeraa.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=8541>

⁸ Ministry of Agriculture. August 17, 2020. Accessed on August 23, 2020. <http://www.zeraa.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=8539>

⁹ Ministry of Water Resources. August 21, 2020. Accessed on August 24, 2020. <https://mowr.gov.iq/ar/node/1416>; <https://mowr.gov.iq/ar/node/1425>; <https://mowr.gov.iq/ar/node/1418>; <https://mowr.gov.iq/ar/node/1424>; <https://mowr.gov.iq/ar/node/1417>; <https://mowr.gov.iq/ar/node/1423>; <https://mowr.gov.iq/ar/node/1422>; <https://mowr.gov.iq/ar/node/1419>; <https://mowr.gov.iq/ar/node/1414>; <https://mowr.gov.iq/ar/node/1413>; <https://mowr.gov.iq/ar/node/1403>

Other Challenges. The MoA Plant Protection Directorate (PPD) continued the campaigns against Red Palm Weevil in Basrah and rodents in Najaf and Diwania, and began a new control operation against the Corn Stalk Borer, a maize pest. Operations will cover all of Iraq, except Basrah, Thi Qar and Karbala governorates. In total, 75,000 ha of maize are being cultivated this season across the entire country except the aforementioned governorates. This scale of production is average, given that the 14 year average is approximately 73,000ha of maize cultivation.¹⁰ Thus, the prevention of the Corn Stalk Borer is essential and PPD will apply chemical pesticides using sprayers from the ground.

IV. Food Supply: Markets (farm to market)

The Minister of Agriculture affirmed Iraq's interest in maintaining agricultural and economic relations with Syria, particularly to increase trade in agricultural goods.¹¹ Historically, Syria has been an important agriculture trading partner and, although trade stalled during the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's occupation, recovered towards the end of 2019, particularly when trade resumed between Al Qaim (Iraq) and Al Bukamal (Syria) on 30 September.¹²

MoA announced that Iraq will accept imports of yellow maize and soybeans for poultry feed until 1 November 2020, a measure to support the breeders of laying and broiler chickens.¹³

In response to the Beirut port explosion on 4 August, Iraq's Cabinet agreed to send approximately 13,000 tons of wheat grain, 3,600 cubic meters of diesel and medical supplies and equipment to Lebanon to aid its recovery.¹

V. Food Demand (markets to consumers)

Prices. Compared to the first week of August, national average prices of basic food commodities remained relatively stable during the third week. On average, vegetable oil and rice prices increased 1%. These bi weekly increases in prices were due to changes in Anbar governorate by 20% (IQD 1,250 to 1,500) for both commodities. However, the price of vegetable oil decreased by 8% (IQD 1,250 to 1,150 per liter) in Kirkuk.

Vegetable prices continued to fluctuate, particularly for products that were in season. Compared with the first week of August the national average price of tomatoes increased by 15%. In Erbil and Salah Al Din, tomato prices increased 100% (IQD 250 to 500 per kg), and 50% in Baghdad and Diyala (IQD 500 to 750 per kg) and Al Muthanna by 43% (350 to 500 IQD per kg). On the other hand, tomato prices decreased in Ninewa by 50% (500 to 250 IQD). Potato prices increased from IQD 400 to 750

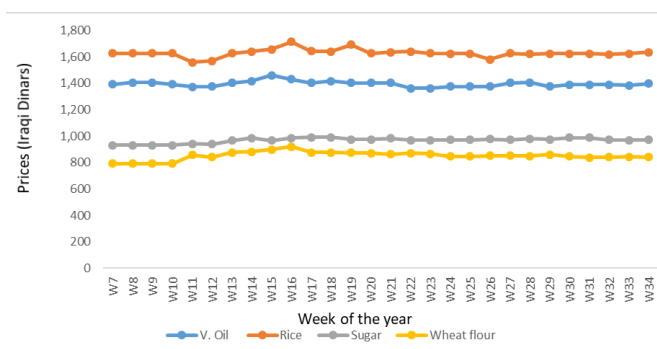


Figure 1. Weekly food prices (national averages) for four staple commodities during the COVID-19 crisis (Source: WFP).

per kg in Maysan, IQD 500 to 750 per kg in Baghdad, and IQD 333 to 500 per kg in Kirkuk, but decreased in Ninewa by 30% (IQD 500 to 350 per kg), and by 33% in Thi Qar (IQD 750 to 500 per kg).

Seasonal fruit prices, in comparison with the first week of August, started to decline in some southern governorates. The price of dates decreased 33% in both Thi Qar (IQD 3,000 to 2,000 per kg) and Maysan (IQD 1,500 to 1,000 per kg). Date prices also decreased in Karbala by 20% (IQD 2,500 to 2,000 per kg) and 13% in Babel (IQD 2,000 to 1,750 per kg).

Consumption Patterns. On August 17th, WFP Hunger Monitoring System data revealed that around 8.1% households, which represents 3.1 million people in Iraq, did not have sufficient food consumption during the third week of August. Compared to the same time last month, this is an increase of around 400,000 people. These estimates were based on a statistically significant sample — on a monthly basis, 1,620 households were interviewed via the telephone. Al Muthana governorate has the highest prevalence of people with insufficient food consumption. Additionally, 13% people reported using negative food-based coping strategies. 'Relying on less expensive food remained the most commonly adopted strategy, where 29.8% adopted that coping strategy, which represents an estimated 12.26 million individuals.



Figure 2. 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).

Around 1.6 million households (25.6% of households) reported challenges accessing markets. This was a decrease compared to first week of August, approximately an additional 90,000 people. Households reporting issues accessing health facilities increased by 70,000 people compared to last week, thus totaling 30.1% of households.

VI. Food Supply Chain for Vulnerable Populations

WFP continues to provide monthly food assistance to more than 332,000 IDPs and refugees residing in the formal camps, including an additional 37,000 new IDPs and refugees whose food security has been impacted by COVID-19. In the IDP camps, with support and coordination with Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD), WFP complements and tops-up government in-kind rations with cash assistance to ensure that beneficiaries have dignified, flexible and sufficient resources to cover their basic nutritional needs. Additionally, the Barzani Charity Foundation distributed 10,000 food parcels in Erbil, Kirkuk, Sulaimaniyah and Dohuk governorates.

¹⁰ FAO STAT. Accessed on August 2020. <http://www.fao.org/3/Y9870E/y9870e07.htm#:~:text=Annual%20average%20area%20for%20maize,to%20supplement%20poultry%20feed%20production>

¹¹ Ministry of Agriculture. August 17, 2020. Accessed on August 23, 2020. <http://www.zeraa.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=8540>

¹² Yagein News. April 30, 2020. Accessed on August 24, 2020. <https://yagein.net/economy/256412>

¹³ Ministry of Agriculture. August 19, 2020. Accessed on August 23, 2020. <http://www.zeraa.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=8545>