



## Government of Iraq (GoI) Announcements

Date	Government Decision
7 September 2020	<p>Supreme Committee for National Health and Safety announced several decisions related to COVID-19 measures, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- border crossings will be open daily for commercial transactions;</li> <li>- 50% of government staff will physically report to work;</li> <li>- the Electoral Commission staff will be exempt from curfew and can reopen biometric registration and card distribution center; and</li> <li>- restaurants and sport centers will re-open.</li> </ul>

## Iraq COVID-19 Food Security Monitor

Issue 17

8 September 2020

### I. Key Messages

- **The Ministry of Agriculture announced receipt of 450,000 tons of wheat seeds through government-owned companies for the 2020/21 season.**
- **Tomato and potato prices continued to fluctuate, but other commodity prices remained relatively stable.**
- **As of 31 August, insufficient food consumption increased by 0.2 million people compared to the third week of August, with Wasit Governorate recording moderately high levels of insufficient food consumption for the first time.**

### II. Overview

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has continued to spread in Iraq. As of 7 September 2020, the World Health Organization reported 260,370 cases and 7,512 deaths, roughly a 27% increase in cases compared to 24 August.<sup>1</sup>

The global economic slowdown, driven by pandemic containment measures, decreased the demand for oil and put downward pressure on prices. In Iraq, oil income accounts for 90% of the government revenue and the drop in oil prices has had a significant impact on country's finances. Over the past two weeks, Basra heavy oil prices have remained stable, fluctuating between USD 44 and USD 47 per barrel, up from minimum of USD 18.7 per barrel in April 2020, but well below USD 58.4 per barrel, the price recorded roughly one year ago.<sup>2</sup>

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 Prime Minister announced that the government would prioritize paying farmers for the commodities sold

to the government (i.e. wheat, etc.) and directed the Ministries of Finance, Trade and Agriculture to identify potential funding solutions.<sup>3</sup> The government aims to pay all outstanding dues for crops procured in 2020 by end of 2020. The Ministry of Agriculture said it had 450,000 tons of wheat seeds through government-owned companies, and the seeds will be redistributed based on the forthcoming agricultural plan.<sup>4</sup> for planting in autumn 2020. This announcement came during a meeting between the MoA and the National Council for Seed and Producers, where the council members also agreed to establish seed purification facilities, approve a request from Anbar based farmers to market wheat seeds based on quality certifications and extend the period where wheat growers could sell their product due to COVID-19.

The Baghdad Al Rasafah Agriculture Directorate announced that they produced and sold over 44 million eggs in August 2020 alone. For comparison, all of the Baghdad Governorate districts produced 133 million eggs in 2018 and 139 million eggs in 2019. The MoA attributed this production increase to government support and the enforced import restrictions, which protected and provided incentives to local producers.<sup>5</sup>

The Marshlands and Wetlands Project Department in Thi Qar is monitoring water flows, with the aim to secure a stable water share for the Abu Zirk marshes in southern Iraq.<sup>6</sup> A similar review of the Salah Al Din water resources is underway, focusing on flood mitigation measures and plans to build the Ma-khoul Dam.<sup>7</sup>

**Other Challenges.** The MoA Plant Protection Department (PPD) continued control campaigns against Red Palm Weevil, rodents and the Corn Stalk Borer. The PPD also re-started operations against the Dubas bug which emerges in the spring and autumn. Currently, the PPD is conducting a survey to identify and determine the prevalence of the infestation, which is assessed based on density of eggs in the orchards. Once the Dubas bugs reach the larva or nymph stage after harvesting in

<sup>1</sup> WHO COVID-19 Dashboard. Accessed on September 8, 2020. <https://covid19.who.int/region/emro/country/iq>

<sup>2</sup> Oil Price Charts. Accessed on August 25, 2020. <https://oilprice.com/oil-price-charts>

<sup>3</sup> Government of Iraq. Accessed on September 7, 2020. <http://www.cabinet.iq/ArticleShow.aspx?ID=9740>

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Agriculture. Accessed on September 7, 2020. <http://zeraa.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=8555>

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Agriculture. Accessed on September 7, 2020. [http://zeraa.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=8557&fbclid=IwAR3vvguD1-82P0eQH0aeQdG0y4dQZlgmUTTPXVec2RLslwtSv1bQN5\\_5lrQ](http://zeraa.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=8557&fbclid=IwAR3vvguD1-82P0eQH0aeQdG0y4dQZlgmUTTPXVec2RLslwtSv1bQN5_5lrQ)

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Water Resources. September 2, 2020. Accessed on September 6, 2020. <https://www.mowr.gov.iq/ar/node/1560>

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Water Resources. September 2, 2020. Accessed on September 6, 2020. <https://www.mowr.gov.iq/ar/node/1540>

late October and November, the PPD will conduct aerial spraying. The Dubas bug campaigns will focus on Najaf, Karbala, Babel, Wasit, Baghdad and Diyala Governorates, the areas that normally report infestations.

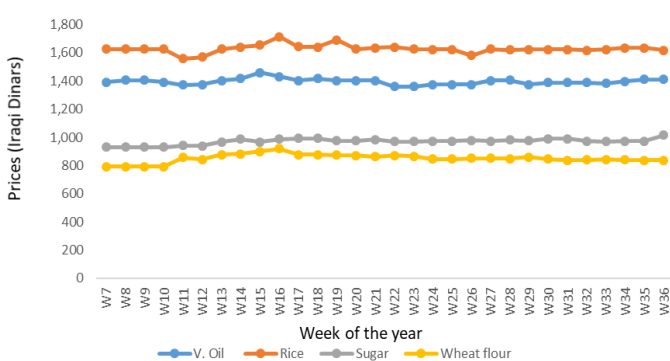
#### IV. Food Supply: Markets (farm to market)

In the beginning of September, the Ministry of Trade (MoT) announced a new distribution cycle of wheat flour across Iraq. Starting from 1 September, Public Distribution System (PDS) agents could receive the seventh round of wheat flour.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, the fourth rice distribution has started through PDS.

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

**Prices.** Compared with the third week of August, no significant weekly changes were observed in the price of basic food commodities. The national average price of vegetable oil, rice and wheat flour prices remained stable, but the price of sugar witnessed a slight 4% increase (IQD 972 to 1014 per kg).

The price of seasonal vegetables continued fluctuating during last two weeks of August and the first week of September. Compared with the third week of August, the prices of tomatoes and potatoes at the national level increased 14% and 4% respectively. The prices of tomatoes witnessed a 100% increase in Najaf (IQD 500 to 1,000 per kg), and 50% increase in Diyala, Anbar and Qadissiyah (IQD 500 to 750 per kg), while in Wasit the price increased 43% (IQD 350 to 500 per kg) and in Babel by 15% (IQD 650 to 750 per kg). Tomato prices decreased by 30% in Ninewa (IQD 500 to 350 per kg) and by 20% in Kirkuk (IQD 625 to 500 per kg), a common occurrence during the tomato producing season. The price of potatoes increased by 50% (IQD 500 to 750 per kg) in three southern governorates (Karbala, Thi Qar and Qadissiyah), but decreased 47% (IQD 625 to 333 per kg) and 30% (IQD 500 to 350 per kg) in Kirkuk and Ninewah respectively.

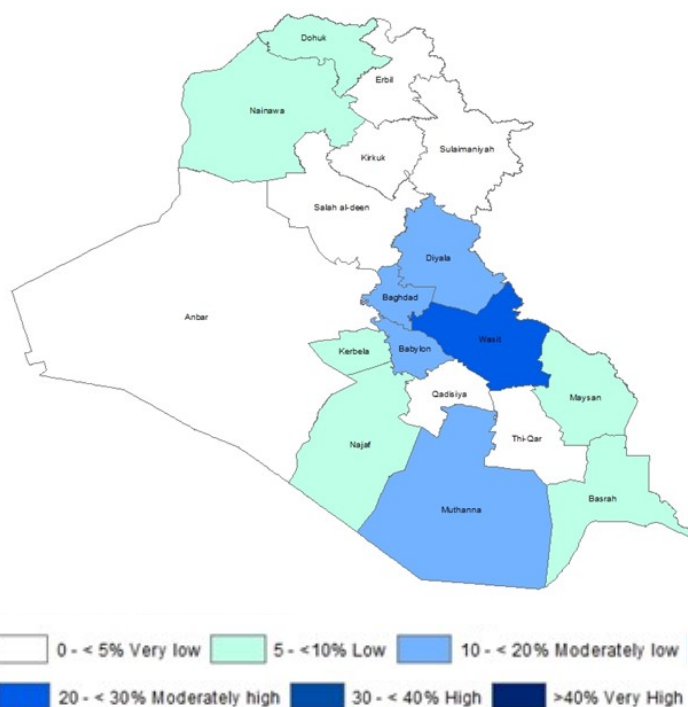


**Figure 1.** Weekly food prices (national averages) for four staple commodities during the COVID-19 crisis (Source: WFP).

**Consumption Patterns.** According to WFP Hunger Monitoring System data, on 31 August around 8.6% of households, representing 3.3 million people in Iraq, did not have sufficient food consumption. This was an increase of approximately 0.2 million people compared to the third week of August. The estimates were based on a statistically significant sample of 1,620 people interviewed telephonically. For the first time, Wasit

Governorate had moderately high levels of insufficient food consumption, while Muthanna, Baghdad, Diyala, and Babel continued to have moderate-low insufficient food consumption.

Additionally, 12.7% people reported adopting negative food-based coping strategies. The most common strategy was ‘relying on less expensive food’; 32.7% of those using coping strategies employed this tactic. Compared to the third week of August, households who reported challenges accessing markets reduced by 1.4%, from 23.5% to 22.1%. 10.8% of those households (roughly 0.66 million people) reported that movement restrictions were the primary issue. On the other hand, households facing difficulties accessing health facilities increased slightly, from 33.6% to 34.5%.



**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).

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

The NGO Directorate under the Minister’s Council General Secretariat also continues the national COVID-19 response campaign, which is entering its fifth month. Despite movement restrictions, the campaign has reached over four million beneficiaries, with more than 2.3 million individuals receiving food assistance between 22 March to 1 August 2020.<sup>9</sup>

In September 2020, WFP is targeting approximately 262,000 IDPs (including 4,000 new COVID19 caseload) and 69,000 refugees (including 34,000 new caseload). WFP continued to utilize different cash delivery instruments, including mobile money transfers, money transfer agents, electronic vouchers, pre-paid card, and cashless transactions in addition to in-kind modalities based on the need.

Food Security Cluster Partners distributed 800,000 food baskets in Kirkuk, Sulaimaniyah and Ninewah in August.

<sup>8</sup>Ministry of Trade. Accessed on September 7, 2020. <https://www.facebook.com/%D9%88%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%A9-1611368825806977/>

<sup>9</sup>NGO Directorate. Accessed on September 7, 2020 <http://www.ngoao.gov.iq/ArticleShow.aspx?ID=959>