



Government of Iraq (GoI) Announcements

Date	Government Decision
26 July 2020	The Supreme Committee for Health and National Safety announced a comprehensive curfew during <i>Eid Al Adha</i> , from July 30 th to August 8 th . ¹

Iraq COVID-19 Food Security Monitor

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I. Key Messages

- The Ministry of Trade announced an USD 212.3 million allocation to pay wheat farmers' dues, compensating farmers for product marketed at government silos.
- The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) has called for negotiations with Turkey to address concerns over the decreased flow of the Tigris River, attributed primarily to the newly operational Alysu Dam.
- According to WFP's Hunger Monitoring System, 15.4% respondents, representing around 5.9 million people, were relying on food based negative coping strategies.

II. Overview

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has continued to affect Iraq. As of July 27, 2020, the World Health Organization reported 110,032 cases in Iraq and 4,362 deaths. Since early July, the number of new cases appear to be stabilizing around 2,500 per day.² The government continues to enforce partial lockdowns and curfew measures in an attempt to curtail transmission, although three international airports reopened for passenger travel on July 23rd in federal Iraq.³ Nevertheless, Iraq will be under a comprehensive lockdown during *Eid Al Adha*, which is set to begin on the evening of July 30th.⁴ Despite COVID-19, protests restarted in several provinces, most recently due to power cuts.⁵

Oil prices continued to be closely monitored as the global economic slowdown decreased the demand for oil, resulting in low prices. For Iraq, the oil revenue stream is vital, accounting for 90% of the government budget. Over the past two weeks, prices remained relatively stable, with Basrah light and Basrah heavy oil prices ranging between USD 44 and 47 per barrel.⁶

This Monitor by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Bank compiles

news and information 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 Ministry of Trade (MoT) announced on July 14th that approximately USD 212.3 million (IQD 253 billion) would be allocated to pay the second installment of outstanding dues to farmers who sold their 2020 wheat harvest to the government.⁷ The first allocation was announced on June 20th, with MoT releasing USD 83.9 million (IQD 100 billion) to pay wheat farmers.⁸ On July 20th, the MoT confirmed that the General Company for Grain Trade received roughly five million tons of wheat this season.⁹ Wheat marketing has slowed down and the General Company for Grain Trade under the Ministry of Trade (MoT) announced that the final day to sell wheat to the government silos was July 25th in Sinjar, Waeliya, Telfar, Mushairefah and Bazawia and all of Sulaimaniyah.¹⁰

The MoA continued to protect local production by preventing the import of certain products. Since May 2019, MoA has not issued import licenses to companies selling whole chickens, table eggs and fish in accordance with Iraqi Council of Representatives Decision No. 41 (2019) and 2019 Cabinet Resolution No. 327 (2019).¹¹ MoA also announced plans to cultivate 250,000 hectares of land with cereals as well as other crops adapted to the agro-ecological climate, such as olives and pistachios. MoA did not specify where these investments would be targeted, but stated that the goal is to increase domestic production, create job opportunities, boost incomes and slow rural to urban migration.¹²

The Veterinary Directorate of the MoA continued the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) vaccination campaign, prioritizing sheep and cattle. MoA staff implementing the campaign were, and continue to be, exempt from lockdown or curfew measures.¹³

¹ Government of Iraq. July 27, 2020. Accessed on July 28, 2020. <https://gds.gov.iq/covid-19-iraqi-government-imposes-total-curfew-during-aid-adha-permits-reopening-of-private-health-clinics/>

² WHO. COVID-19 Dashboard. Accessed on July 28, 2020. <https://covid19.who.int/region/emro/country/iq>

³ Kurdistan 24. July <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/1f7b4d89-a78d-4b2a-9ac2-40d8ee853d27>

⁴ Middle East Monitor. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200723-iraq-to-impose-full-lockdown-during-aid-to-prevent-covid-19/>

⁵ Middle East Monitor. July 27, 2020. Accessed on July 28, 2020. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200727-iraq-two-protesters-die-after-clashes-with-police-in-baghdad/>

⁶ Oil Price. July 27, 2020. Accessed on July 28, 2020. <https://oilprice.com/oil-price-charts>

⁷ Face Iraq. July 14, 2020. <https://www.faceiraq.org/inews.php?id=7782634>

⁸ Al Sabah. June 21, 2020. Accessed on July 27, 2020. <https://alsabaah.iq/26742>

⁹ Face Iraq. July 21, 2020. <https://www.faceiraq.org/inews.php?id=7790938>

¹⁰ Mubasher News. July 21, 2020. Accessed on July 26, 2020. <https://www.mubasher.info/news/3670950/>

¹¹ Ministry of Agriculture. July 19, 2020. Accessed on July 26, 2020. <http://www.zeraa.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=8512>

¹² Face Iraq. July 13, 2020. Accessed on July 26, 2020. <https://www.faceiraq.org/inews.php?id=7781575>

¹³ Ministry of Agriculture. July 21, 2020. Accessed on July 26, 2020. <http://www.zeraa.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=8513>

Other Challenges. As a result of the successful control campaigns, MoA's Plant Protection Directorate ceased most operations. Control campaigns against Red Palm Weevil in Basrah Governorate and rodents in Diwania and Najaf Governorates continued.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (MoAWR), inflows of the Tigris River have dropped from 600 cubic meters per second to 300-320 cubic meters per second after the Alysud dam became operational in May 2020.¹⁴ MoA has called for negotiations with Turkey to address the decreasing water inflows.¹⁵ The International Organization for Migration (IOM) also recently released a report on water in Iraq that found water levels were decreasing at an "unprecedented rate" and highlighted concerns of future displacement due to ongoing and future water crises.¹⁶

IV. Food Supply: Markets

The Ministry of Agriculture estimated farmers produced 850,000 to 900,000 tons of barley this season, resulting in a surplus. The Council of Ministers approved the MoA's request to export any barley that exceeds domestic demand through private sector companies, with the stipulation that the product would be sold for no less than USD 125 per ton. The Ministry of Agriculture also stated that private companies could export four products with surplus to the Gulf countries, namely tomatoes, potatoes, cucumbers and eggplants. The private sector and the Iraqi General Company for the Manufacture and Marketing of Dates have also been allowed to export due to a surplus of production that exceeds local needs.¹⁷

V. Food Demand (markets to consumers)

Prices. The national average price of the main food commodities remained stable, with a slight reduction in vegetable oil prices (-2%). Compared with the second week of July, the price of vegetable oil decreased 17% in Sulaimaniyah (IQD 1,800 to 1,500 per liter) and 13% in Salah Al Din (IQD 2,000 to 1,750 per liter). The national average price for sugar remained unchanged, but the prices increased in Thi Qar by 17% (IQD 750 to 875 per kg) and decreased 8% in Sulaimaniyah (IQD 1,200 to 1,100 per kg). Similarly, the wheat flour prices did not fluctuate at the national level; however, prices in Kerbala increased by 13% (IQD 680 to 770 per kg).

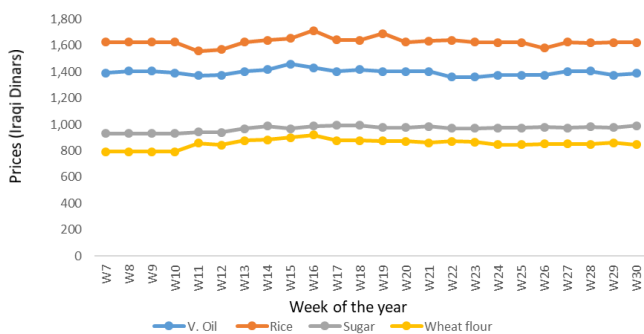


Figure 1. Weekly food prices (national averages) for four staple commodities during the COVID-19 crisis (Source: WFP).

Seasonal vegetable prices continued to fluctuate. Compared to the third week of July, the price of potatoes increased by 43% in Maysan (IQD 350 to 500 per kg) and 40% in Ninewa (IQD 250 to 350 per kg). On the other hand, potatoes prices decreased in Erbil by 50% (IQD 500 to 250 per kg) and Thi Qar by 33% (IQD 750 to 500 per kg). Onion prices increased from IQD 333 to 500 per kg in Kirkuk, but decreased in Thi Qar and Babel by 33% and 23% respectively. For the first time in a few weeks, the price of tomatoes remained stable across all governorates, but increased from IQD 250 to 500 per kg in Najaf.

Consumption Patterns. On July 20th, WFP mVAM reported that approximately 3.4 million people had insufficient food consumption. Compared with the second week of July, this was a reduction of about 100,000 individuals. During the same period, 15.4% of respondents (representing around 5.9 million of people) employed negative food based coping strategies, which was calculated using a standard food based Coping Strategy Index. The most common strategy was relying on less expensive food, with 29% households reporting adopting it; this was a 2% decrease compared to the second week of July. All estimates are based on a statistically significant sample of 1,620 households interviewed over the telephone.

31.5% of households (approximately 1.9 million people) reported issues accessing the market, with 68.8% of those households (roughly 0.97 million people) reporting that movement restrictions were the primary reason for that challenge. Compared with data from July 13th, the number of households facing difficulties accessing health facilities decreased from 28.5% to 25.5%. This finding aligns with the relaxed movement restrictions.

VI. Food Supply Chain for Vulnerable Populations

Ongoing Response. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) announced a plan to distribute USD 11.7 million (IQD 14 billion) to 140,000 households in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq after the *Eid Al Adha*. The distribution will target poor households in the three governorates, targeting roughly 56,000 households in Sulaimaniyah, 49,000 in Erbil and 35,000 in Duhok. Each household will receive a one-time disbursement of IQD 100,000. The basic selection criteria is that each household should earn less than IQD 400,000 per month.¹⁸

UN/NGO Response. As part of its COVID-19 response, WFP continued to target and add eligible families to its monthly assistance. Since May 2020, more than 35,400 refugees and IDPs have been included for food assistances. Assessments have been ongoing to identify other vulnerable and food-insecure families in camps. These families would be included in the August distribution cycle.

The GoI and KRG began to register, facilitate and support families willing to return to Sinjar and surrounding areas in western Ninewa Governorate. So far, more than 1,224 families (6,616 individuals) have departed from various camps in Duhok, in addition to 858 out-of-camp families (4,905 individuals).

¹⁴ The Arab Weekly. July 17, 2020. Accessed on July 27, 2020. <https://theArabweekly.com/iraq-complains-turkey-causing-water-shortages>.

¹⁵ Seventh Day News. July 18, 2020. Accessed on July 26, 2020. <https://www.youm7.com/story/2020/7>

¹⁶ IOM. July 2020. <https://iraq.iom.int/publications/water-quantity-and-water-quality-central-and-south-iraq-preliminary-assessment-context>

¹⁷ Face Iraq. July 13, 2020. Accessed on July 26, 2020. <https://www.faceiraq.org/inews.php?id=7782120>

¹⁸ Rudaw. July 21, 2020. Accessed on July 27, 2020. <https://www.rudaw.net/sorani/kurdistan/2107202016>