



Government of Iraq (GoI) Announcements

Date	Government Decision
June 17, 2020	The Ministry of Agriculture reduced export fees for wool and leather producers from June 2020 and the State General Company for Agricultural Supplies allowed farmers to purchase agricultural harvesters and tractors on credit or installment payments. ⁵

Iraq COVID-19 Food Security Monitor

Weekly Update - Issue 10

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I. Key Messages

- **The Ministry of Trade announced that the local wheat production has exceeded 3 million tons.**
- **Common, seasonal pests have been reported nationwide, including the Peach fly, Jasmine White fly and Tomato Leafminer.**
- **Staple commodity prices remained stable, while seasonal vegetable prices fluctuated; for example, tomato prices experienced 100% increase in Baghdad (250 to 500 IQD) and a 25% increase in Ninewa (400 to 500 IQD).**

II. Overview

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continued to affect the world. As of June 22, 2020, the World Health Organization reported 30,868 cases in Iraq, with 1,100 deaths and 1,646 new cases daily. Oil prices also continued to be tracked closely given that developments in global oil prices have significant implications on the state revenue. Indeed, the 2020 budget was prepared assuming that a barrel of crude oil would cost USD 56. Basrah heavy oil prices rose from USD 41.76 per barrel on June 15th to USD 44.73 on June 19th. Basrah light oil prices also increased from USD 43.61 to USD 46.09 in the same time period.¹

The Ministry of Planning, World Bank and representatives from donor countries met this month to discuss how to leverage the results from the 2018 Kuwait Donors' Conference to support the Iraqi government in its reconstruction efforts hampered by COVID-19 and financial challenges, primarily driven by the global economic slowdown. Participants highlighted the need to diversify the economy, strengthen public finance management, invest in human capital and expand social protection schemes.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. Local wheat production exceeded three million tons as the wheat harvest was finalized in the north. The Ministry of Trade (MoT) continued to monitor the marketing progress. The summer growing season has begun, including irrigated vegetables, maize, rice and sorghum. To boost local production, the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) stressed the importance of timely distributions of fertilizers per each governorate's plan. MoA also considered the provision of advanced irrigation equipment as part of the government support package.⁴

MoA revised Law No. 35 (1983), allowing farmers to rent 1.25 - 2.5 ha of government land for 10 to 25 years and establish orchards. The revisions also stipulated that farmers who cultivate approximately 4.4 ha or less in the semi-arid and arid rangelands, known as the *Badia*, will be allowed to rent more government land in the future.³ The MoA announced measures to enforce Law No. 117 (1970), which determines land ownership, by establishing a Certification Documentation Division within the Agricultural Land Department to improve documentation.⁴ MoA was also considering amendments to Law No. 24 (2013), which originally allowed the agriculture and veterinary college graduates to apply to receive 12.5 ha of irrigated land or 37.5 ha of rainfed land from the government that they own after ten years. The amendments would include retirees and farmers would own the land after only five years.³

The Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR) continued to support maintenance campaigns to ensure that districts receive their water quotas and the water reaches the agriculture land. The Agriculture Directorates of Diyala, Kirkuk, and Salah al Din continued cleaning and rehabilitating drains and canal networks.⁵ The health of natural water ecosystems also appeared to be improving; on June 19th, the MoWR announced that the salinity levels in the central marshes returned to normal due to increased flow from the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and pumped water from the Antar and Dair Rivers.⁶

In accordance with Order No. 10 (2020), the Food and Social Security Team held its first session on June 16th. The meeting

¹ Oil Price Charts. May 30, 2020. Accessed on May 31, 2020. <https://oilprice.com/oil-price-charts>

² Mubasher Iraq. July 17, 2020. <https://www.mubasher.info/news/3655641/>

³ Ministry of Agriculture. June 16, 2020. Accessed on June 22, 2020. <http://www.zeraa.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=8491>

⁴ Ministry of Agriculture. June 16, 2020. Accessed on June 22, 2020. <http://www.zeraa.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=8494>

⁵ Ministry of Water Resources. June 18, 2020. Accessed on June 21, 2020. <https://mowr.gov.iq/ar/node/924>

⁶ Ministry of Water Resources. June 19, 2020. Accessed on June 21, 2020. <https://www.facebook.com/waterresources2/>

was headed by the Minister of Planning, with participation from the Ministries of Agriculture, Trade and Planning and the heads of the Iraqi Industries Federation and Chambers of Commerce. The team highlighted the importance of ensuring sufficient supply, encouraging local food processing and adopting information management systems that support local producers. They also highlighted the importance of promoting the agricultural private sector and domestic products among Iraqi consumers.⁷

Other Challenges. From April 21 to June 20, 2020, the Civil Defense Directorate reported 264 fires, with 3200 ha of cropland burned and 48,310 ha rescued. The reasons for the fires have not been officially updated as of this report.

Several pest infestations are currently affecting agriculture production. The Plant Protection Directorate (PPD) began distributing pheromones and pesticides to control these three pests. PPD teams in Najaf and Diwaniyah governorates continue to work to control rodents in open fields and agricultural lands and extra pesticides have been distributed to farmers to control the outbreak. Peach fly and Jasmine White fly infested 7,500 ha of peach, citrus and other fruit orchards in Baghdad, Wasit, Babel, Salah Al Din, Najaf, Karbala and Diyala. Tomato Leafminers (*Tuta absoluta*) also affected 4,000 ha nationwide.

The PPD has begun planning for the Dubas bug autumn control campaign in preparation for the September and October date harvests. Control operations against other date palm pests, including Al Humara pest (Lesser Date Moth), Red Palm Weevil and dust mites, were ongoing.

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

On June 16th, the Committee on Agriculture, Water and Marshes renewed its call to tighten border controls to prevent the entry of imported agricultural products. The Committee noted an increased amount of imported products on the local market and requested that the offenders face criminal charges. The Border Authority did successfully detain a 38 ton shipment of yellow corn in Khor Al-Zubair port in Basra, one of the banned agricultural products as of April 2020.⁸

The Sinjar silo in Ninewa was reopened after six years of closure after it was completely destroyed by terrorist groups. The silo has a capacity of 80,000 tons.

V. Food Demand (markets to consumers)

Prices. Compared with the second week of June, the price of basic commodities did not witness any significant change at both the national and governorate level; however, the prices of seasonal vegetables witnessed considerable changes. Tomato prices experienced 100% increase in Baghdad (250 to 500 IQD) and a 25% increase in Ninewa (400 to 500 IQD). This change might be linked to the complete lockdown in both cities, potentially hampered the supply chain of fresh produce despite the fact that it is one of the agriculture products where imports are banned. On the other hand, the price of tomato decreased in Duhok and Kirkuk by 20% and 33% respectively.

Consumption Patterns. On June 15th, WFP's mVAM system estimated around 2.86 million people (7.4%) had insufficient food consumption nationwide. Roughly 14% of respondents

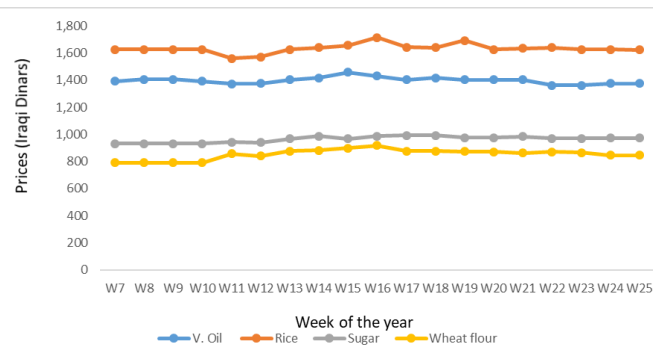


Figure 1. Weekly food prices (national averages) for four staple commodities during the COVID-19 crisis (Source: WFP).

reported adopting negative coping strategies. Given the sample size, this represents around 5.4 million people in the country, an increase of 40,000 people from last week. “Relying on less expensive food” was the most commonly used coping strategy, with 30.8% of whom using copings were employing this strategy. Around two million households reported that they faced challenges to access markets, an increase of 70,000 households compared to last week. “Travel restrictions” were the most commonly reported reason that people could not access markets. Around 0.7 million households reported that they faced challenges accessing health facilities, which was an increase of 30,000 individuals compared to the last week.



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

As part of the fourth distribution cycle of the Public Distribution System (PDS), six million bags of local wheat flour were distributed nationwide. In order to ensure that only high quality flour is distributed, monitoring and quality assurance teams conducted field visits to the mills and conduct lab tests on random samples from food agents.

UN/NGO Response. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Iraq Humanitarian Fund (IHF) allocated USD 1.1 million to the Food Security Cluster (FSC) to conduct agriculture-focused activities.

FSC partners continue to provide food assistance as a COVID-19 response to vulnerable households in Sulaymaniyah and Halabja; however, some partners reported some movement and access issues. For example, ICRC suspended cash assistance distribution to 75 out of camp families in Chamchamal and Kalar due to COVID-19 related government movement restrictions.

⁷ Ministry of Planning. June 16, 2020. Accessed on June 22, 2020. https://mop.gov.iq/activities_minister/view/details?id=1174

⁸ Border Control Authority. June 16, 2020. Accessed on June 22, 2020. <https://mcbpc.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=662>