



Government of Iraq (GoI) Announcements

Date	Government Decision
May 3, 2020	GoI Parliament announced it will start implementing an emergency agriculture plan. ³

Iraq COVID-19 Food Security Monitor

Weekly Update - Issue 4

5 May 2020

I. Key Messages

- **Harvesting of wheat and barley is in full swing in the center of Iraq, and is mostly completed in the south.**
- **The government has launched control measures against several pests, including locusts, Dubas bug, Sunn pest and rodents.**
- **Prices are generally stable; however, in Anbar and Ninewa governorates the price of rice increased 100%.**
- **93% of households surveyed in April have acceptable food consumption scores; however, more than half of the households are adopting negative coping mechanisms.**

II. Overview

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to affect the world, including Iraq. As of May 4, 2020, the World Health Organization reported 2,219 cases in Iraq, with 95 deaths. Movement restrictions and curfews remain in place in to curtail transmission of the disease; however, certain measures have been relaxed. 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, agriculture production and the overall food system.

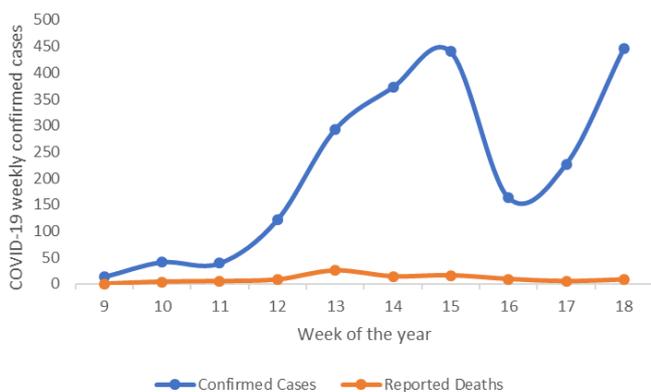


Figure 1. Number of reported COVID-19 cases and deaths in Iraq by week, where week 18 is April 26-May 2.

III. Food Supply: Production (primarily on farm)

Wheat and barley harvests continue in the south and center. The Ministry of Trade (MoT) has stated that in the first eight days of marketing, the General Company for Grain Trade has received 64,181 tonnes of wheat, of which 96% has been classified as “first class”.¹ As harvesting continues, the Diwaniya governor has called upon the Ministries of Agriculture and Trade to improve the marketing process by reducing delays and preventing overcrowding at the collection centers.²

The GoI Parliament has announced that it will start implementing an emergency agriculture plan in light of the challenges facing Iraq. Agriculture was identified as a priority for the country in order to decrease dependence on oil revenues.³

Other Challenges. Fires have been reported in wheat and barley fields located in Salah al Din, Najaf and Diyala governorates. In response, the government has proposed additional security measures to protect agriculture land.⁴

Numerous pests continue to threaten agriculture production in Iraq. Central governorates have reported an outbreak of the Dubas bug, a common date palm pest. Control campaigns in date orchards has begun in Karbala and may expand to Najaf, Wasit and Baghdad as necessary. In KR-I, the government has reported a Sunn pest outbreak and declared it a critical economic threat. The infestation appears to be concentrated in areas adjacent to the mountains and the Agriculture Directorate has begun distributing insecticide to wheat farmers to control the outbreak. The Plant Protection Directorate has also detected the pest in Kirkuk and Mosul governorates; however, the populations have not reached a critical threshold (one insect per square meter). The Desert Locust populations appear to be mostly under control, with the Directorate of Plant Protection and governorate-level Agriculture Directorates continuing control campaigns against nymph populations in Al Muthanna, Najaf and Diwania governorates. The government will assess the impact of the pest on yields in the coming

¹ Ministry of Trade. May 3, 2020. Accessed on May 4, 2020. <http://www.mot.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=5657>

² Face Iraq. May 3, 2020. Accessed on May 3, 2020. <https://www.faceiraq.org/inews.php?id=7691537>

³ Al Sumaria News. May 3, 2020. Accessed on May 4, 2020. <https://www.alsumaria.tv/news/%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF/343948/alsumaria-article>

⁴ Iraqi Parliament. April 30, 2020. Accessed on May 3, 2020. <https://ar.parliament.iq/2020/04/30/>

weeks, but officials anticipate that the losses are minimal. Rodent populations have also impacted wheat and barley harvest in Mahnawiyah district of Diwaniyah governorate.⁵

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

Markets. The government's Crisis Management Team is continuing to inspect checkpoints to ensure the ongoing flow of food and medical supplies. Recent inspections occurred in Al-Sha'ab and Yusufiyah districts of Baghdad governorate, Al-Sukoor district in Anbar governorate and Alexandria district in Babel governorate.⁶

Iraq's April oil revenues were roughly \$1.4 billion USD, approximately half of the March revenues (approximately \$3 billion USD). According to the Ministry of Oil, Iraqi oil sold for an average of \$13.8 USD per barrel, a significant drop compared to March's average of \$28.44 and February's average of \$51.37. In alignment with the OPEC agreement to reduce oil supply, Iraq will reduce production in the Basrah oil fields by 23% in the coming days.⁷

Imports and Exports. The Minister of Agriculture (MoA) has requested that border controls be closely monitored and existing import regulations be enforced in order to boost domestic production.⁸

Food Reserves. Three million bags of flour for the upcoming ration distribution were produced domestically. The MoT affirmed that the mills adhered to all quality control measures and regulations.⁹ The Minister of Trade has also stressed the importance of monitoring the food security situation and increasing emergency food stocks to mitigate risks. The Crisis Management Cell discussed undertaking a comprehensive study to determine storage requirements, specifically for wheat and rice.

V. Food Demand (markets to consumers)

Prices. Basic food commodity prices stayed generally stable during last week of April compared to the previous week. On average nationwide, there was a 3% price increase for wheat flour and rice and a 1% price increase for vegetable oil. Anbar governorate has the most significant week to week price volatility; rice prices increased 100%, wheat flour 50% and vegetable oil 20% as compared to the week earlier. In Ninewa, the price of rice also increased by 100%. The government continues monitoring market prices and identifying retailers who have increased their prices during the pandemic.

Consumption Patterns. The April mVAM data (the COVID-19 phone-based household survey) revealed that most of the surveyed households (93%) have acceptable food consumption whereas 7% have borderline (5%) or poor (2%) food consumption scores. That being said, more than half of the households with acceptable food consumption were also using coping mechanisms to ensure good food consumption. 42% of

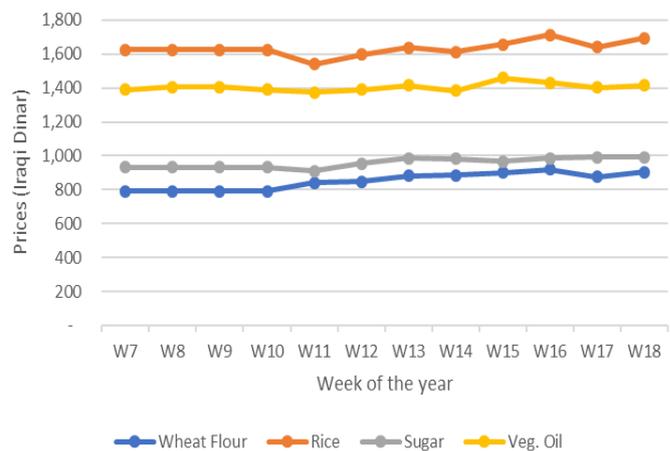


Figure 2. Weekly food prices (national averages) for four staple commodities during the COVID-19 crisis.

households were employing food based coping strategies, including adults eating less so children could eat more (33%), reducing the number of meals per day (21%), reducing meal portion sizes (20%) or relying on less expensive food (17%).

VI. Food Supply Chain for Vulnerable Populations

Ongoing Response. The *Minha* programme will start disbursing cash to targeted households during the first week of May. The payments will initially be for two months; however, the programme may be extended.¹⁰

MoT has stressed on the importance of social cohesion in the current circumstances and has reiterated its commitment to provide technical and financial support to assist vulnerable people.

UN/NGO Response. WFP continues to provide assistance to vulnerable refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) living in camps. In April, WFP reached more than 310,000 people with cash assistance. In May, the response is expected to expand to reach additional caseload.

In April, Food Security Cluster partners provided food assistance to 144,193 out-of-camp individuals and 87,210 in-camp individuals. Partners have reported that due to loosening of curfew and lockdown measures, the number of food assistance requests have decreased in some areas. Partners speculate that this due to the fact that people are able to access their source of income again.

⁵ Al Mirbad. April 28, 2020. Accessed on May 3, 2020. <https://www.almirbad.com/detail/49943>

⁶ General Secretariat for the Council of Ministers. April 29, 2020. Accessed on May 2, 2020. <http://www.cabinet.iq/ArticleShow.aspx?ID=9575>

⁷ Ghafuri, Lawk. Rudaw. May 1, 2020. Accessed on May 2, 2020. <https://www.rudaw.net/english/business/01052020>

⁸ Ministry of Agriculture. April 29, 2020. Accessed on May 3, 2020. <http://www.zeraa.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=8454>

⁹ Ministry of Trade. May 3, 2020. Accessed on May 3, 2020. <http://www.mot.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=5647>

¹⁰ Alalam News Network. May 3, 2020. Accessed on May 4, 2020. <https://www.alalamtv.net/news/4904346/>