



Government of Iraq (GoI) Announcements

Date	Government Decision
May 12, 2020	The Cabinet met for a second ordinary session and decisions relevant to the food security sector include: (i) conduct a study on expanding those targeted by the Social Protection Law and (ii) hold a consultative meeting on lessons learned from last year's wheat and barley marketing. ¹

Iraq COVID-19 Food Security Monitor

Weekly Update - Issue 6

19 May 2020

I. Key Messages

- From April 21st to May 18th, the Civil Defense Directorate reported 121 fires in 16 governorates, with 658 ha of cropland burned.⁴
- 59,700 laying hens were diagnosed with bird flu in Ninewah governorate.
- 2.84 million people (around 7% of Iraq's total population) had insufficient food consumption based on WFP mVAM data from April 18th to May 16th.

II. Overview

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to affect the world, including Iraq. As of May 18, 2020, the World Health Organization reported 3,404 cases in Iraq, with 144 deaths. Compared to last week, the number of COVID-19 cases in Iraq increased 46%, while the global caseload decreased 3%. 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.

III. Food Supply: Production (primarily on farm)

Production. Wheat and barley harvesting was underway in the north and ongoing in the center. In Dohuk, Sulaimaniyah and Erbil, wheat and barley harvesting began in mid-May and will continue until the beginning of June.

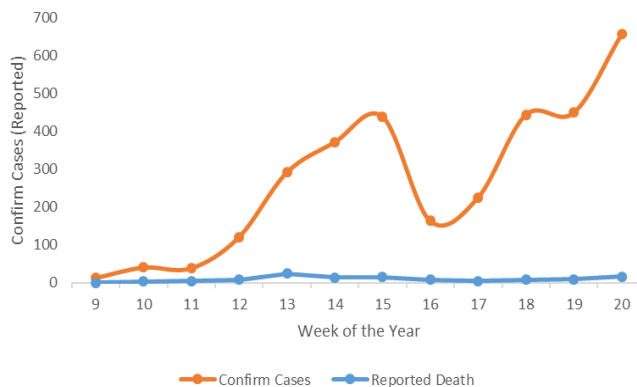


Figure 1. Number of reported COVID-19 cases and deaths in Iraq by week, where Week 20 is May 10—May 16.

The Acting Minister of Agriculture also held a meeting with top ministry officials about the summer agricultural plan and the harvesting/marketing of wheat and barley. In preparation for the summer crop season, the MoA will begin distributing subsidized fertilizers and seeds (i.e. rice, yellow corn and vegetable) to registered farmers for summer crop cultivation. MoA will ensure that each governorate receives an adequate water quota, while also encouraging farmers to improve irrigation technologies and adopt Water User Associations. Livestock farmers will also receive feed at subsidized prices, and a vaccination campaign for cattle, buffalo, sheep and goats will be administered free of charge.²

Other Challenges. From April 21, 2020 to May 18, 2020, the Civil Defense Directorate reported 121 fires in 16 governorates, with 658 ha of cropland burned and 9,917 ha rescued. The cause of field fires vary, but include power cord failure (43 fires), spark from a generator (20), cigarettes (11) and terrorist act (3), among others. In comparison, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) that by May 31st last year there were 250 crop fires affecting 8,646 ha.³

On May 15th, MoA diagnosed 59,700 laying hens with bird flu (H5N8) in Ninewah. In accordance with Animal Health Law 32, all poultry were euthanized and the transport of poultry and other birds has been banned within the governorate.⁴ There have been outbreaks of bird flu in Iraq every year since 2016.⁵

Three date palm pests have been reported. First, the Dubas bug outbreaks have been reported in Karbala, Najaf, Babel, Wasit, Baghdad and Diyala, requiring government aerial and land spraying or trunk injection control operations. Karbala has the highest rate of infestation, with 3,500 ha affected, followed by Diyala (2,250 ha), Wasit (1,750 ha), Babel (750 ha), Baghdad (750 ha) and Najaf (500 ha). A hectare contains approximately 140 date palms, thus the Directorate of Plan Protection estimates that 1.33 million date palms have been infested this season. The Dubas bug produces a viscous substance called honeydew that fall onto the dates, ruining the commercial viability of the fruits. The government offers control campaigns to farmers free of charge and may compensate

¹ General Secretariat for the Council of Ministers. May 14, 2020. Accessed on May 18, 2020. <https://cabinet.iq/ArticleShow.aspx?ID=9602>

² Ministry of Agriculture. May 14, 2020. Accessed on May 16, 2020. <http://www.zeraa.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=8466>

³ OCHA. June 10, 2019. Accessed on May 12, 2020. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20190610_iraqhumanitariansnapshot_may.pdf

⁴ Face Iraq. May 15, 2020. Accessed on May 16, 2020. Bird flu. <https://www.faceiraq.org/inews.php?id=7708696>.

⁵ Riva, N. January 10, 2020. Accessed on May 19, 2020. <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/0615d02c-2765-4e38-80c0-46acffd787b4>

farmers for their losses if control operations are not effective or the government cannot provide their services. Second, the Al Humara pest (Lesser Date Moth) is a common date palm pest and this season it has infested 10,500 ha across the country, excluding Kirkuk, Ninewah, Dohuk, Sulaimaniyah and Erbil. If control operations do not occur, orchards expect to lose up to 30 to 50% of their total production. Third, normal Red Palm Weevil monitoring is ongoing.

Desert Locust control campaigns paused as populations were under control; however, a small pocket of nymphs have been reported in the desert of Al Muthanna governorate. A limited control campaign will commence shortly. Sunn pest control campaigns will continue in Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaimaniyah until the end of May (timed with the harvest of wheat and barley). In Ninewah governorate, a survey only reported a few nymphs, thus a formal control operation is not planned; however, farmers have received the required pesticide in order to facilitate a response if necessary.

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

Markets. The General Company for Grain Trade announced that as of May 19th, they received roughly 1.29 million tons of wheat since the beginning of this season.⁶ 13 governorates received sufficient wheat to fill the Public Distribution System (PDS) rations till the end of 2020, meanwhile MoT continues to set up a plan for a strategic stock and address farmers' challenges. The Kurdish regional government (KRG) anticipates being able to purchase 389,000 tons of wheat from farmers in Dohuk, Sulaimaniyah and Erbil at the government subsidized prices (420,000—560,000 IQD per ton), while farmers will need to sell the remainder at market prices (300,000—400,000 IQD per ton). This is similar to previous years with a slight increase; in 2019, KRG purchased 340,000 tons of wheat from local farmers.

Iraq has cut oil production following the OPEC+ agreement, but is falling short of the agreed target of cutting 1 million barrels per day (bpd). Currently, Iraq only cutting 700,000 bpd. Oil company "majors" such as BP, Exxon Mobil, Lukoil and Eni are resisting requests to cut additional production.⁷ Oil prices also continue to affect Iraq's state revenue; the State Organization for Marketing of Oil announced that in the first four months of 2020 Iraq sold roughly 409 million barrels at an average price of \$38 p/barrel. In comparison, Iraq sold roughly 423 million barrels during the same period in 2019 at an average price of \$62 per barrel. Thus, Iraq has already lost \$11 billion USD in the past four months.⁸

V. Food Demand (markets to consumers)

Prices. Compared to the first week of May, national prices were generally stable. The average price of rice nationwide decreased 2% (1,692 to 1,658 IQD), with the largest price drops occurring in Basrah (10%, 2,500 to 2,250 IQD), Diyala, Thi Qar (both by 6%, 2,000 to 1,875 IQD) and Kirkuk (5%, 1,500 to 1,425 IQD).

The highest week-to-week (w/w) increase was observed in chicken prices (7%), increasing 57% in Anbar and 29% in Baghdad. The largest w/w price decrease was observed in toma-

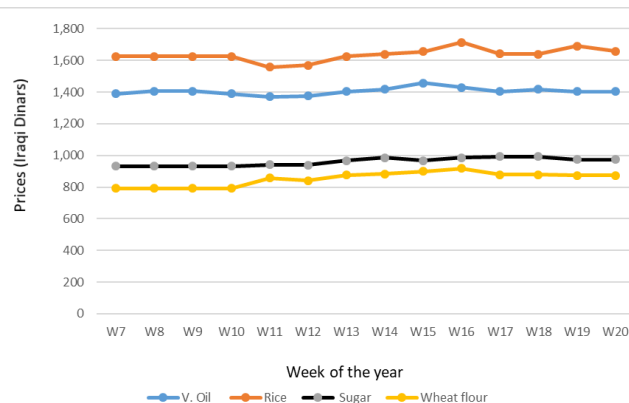


Figure 2. Weekly food prices (national averages) for four staple commodities during the COVID-19 crisis.

atoes (-23%), decreasing in Karbala (-50%), Diyala (-50%), Maysan (-50%), Ninewah (-47%), Babylon (-33%), Basrah (-33%), Muthanna (-33%), Anbar (-33%) and Thi Qar (-33%). This price change is attributed to seasonality. National onion and potato prices also went down by 18% and 15% respectively.

For Kurdistan, the Kurdish Regional Statistics Office (KSRO) released the March Consumer Price Index (CPI), which reported a 0.4% monthly increase in CPI (monthly inflation). The food group CPI had the highest increase at 2.6%.⁹

Consumption Patterns. WFP continued the household mVAM surveys. Data from April 18 to May 16 found that in a 14 day recall period, 23% of all surveyed households reported a lack of money as the reason for insufficient food. 2.84 million people had insufficient food consumption (i.e. those with poor or borderline food consumption scores) and approximately half of those individuals relied on social safety nets for their cereal goods, including the PDS, gifts/charities and humanitarian aid.

VI. Food Supply Chain for Vulnerable Populations

Ongoing Response. The MoT launched the 4th PDS distribution cycle for wheat flour in 2020. They increased the number of monitoring teams to guarantee proper distributions. The *Minha* grant programme began disbursing assistance directly in collaboration with CBI contracted Financial Service Providers (FSP) and Point of Sale (POS) agents. The official number of individuals reached will be reported shortly. The Ministry of Migration and Displacement continue their assistance for IDP camps during Ramadan, covering more than 90% of the IDP camp caseload and also reaching IDP out-of-camp populations. Households receive 23kg of food assistance and WFP provides 11,000 IQD per person each month.

UN/NGO Response. The NGO Directorate under the Minister's Council General Secretariat reported that as of May 4th, non-governmental organizations and other local charities have reached 1,621,301 beneficiaries with food assistance.¹⁰ Food Security Cluster partners continued to distribute emergency baskets, yet partners report less demand from individuals. For example, the Barzani Charity Foundation (BCF) "Food Hotline" stopped receiving calls in certain areas, so some phone lines have been suspended.¹¹

⁶ Interior Ministry of Trade May 19, 2020. Accessed on May 19, 2020. <https://ar-ar.facebook.com/pages/category/Government-Organization>

⁷ Mohammed, A. and A. Rasheed. Reuters. May 13, 2020. Accessed on May 18, 2020. <https://af.reuters.com/article/energyOilNews/idAFL8N2CV4V7>

⁸ Middle East Monitor. May 12, 2020. Accessed on May 19, 2020. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200512-iraq-loses-11bn-in-four-months-as-oil-prices-plunge/>

⁹ KSRO. CPI and Inflation Rate in KRI March 2020. May 2020. Accessed on May 19 2020. <http://www.krso.net/files/articles/130520125017.pdf>

¹⁰ Minister's Council General Secretariat, NGO Department. Accessed on May 19, 2020. <http://www.ngoao.gov.iq/uploads/DOC/6th.pdf>

¹¹ Barzani Charity Foundation. Accessed on May 12, 2020. <http://www.bcf.krd/english/coronavirus/>