



World Food Programme

Bulletin 5 – April 2015

IRAQ

April 2015: Conflict affects food security in central and northern governorates

Highlights

- **Conflict is negatively affecting the Iraqi population's food security, particularly in the governorates of Ninewa, Kirkuk, Salah Al-Din and Duhok, where nearly one in ten households are consuming a borderline or inadequate diet. Chronic food insecurity persists in the governorates of Wassit and Muthanna.**
- **The food security of Iraq's 2.68 million internally displaced people (IDPs)¹ has been particularly affected. Their diets have deteriorated and one in four IDP households are using negative coping strategies – a far higher proportion than among non-displaced households.**
- **More people have received rations through the government-run public distribution system (PDS) in the south than in central and northern governorates.**
- **Households in conflict-affected areas such as Anbar, parts of Ninewa and Kirkuk are facing higher prices for staple foods and reduced purchasing power.**

Methodology –mVAM remote data collection

Insecurity in Iraq makes primary data collection a challenge in many locations. To document the impact of the conflict on food security, WFP is using remote data collection through live telephone surveys, collecting basic food security data from the population. WFP has used phone surveys in other settings, and the method deployed in Iraq has been informed by [prior field experience](#).

In March 2015, WFP's mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping team (mVAM) conducted its first round of household food security monitoring using live telephone interviews throughout Iraq. Data were collected from a representative random sample of 1,163 respondents from 18 governorates using Korek, an Iraqi mobile network operator. Korek randomly selected respondents across Iraq from their own database. The Food Consumption Score (FCS), reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI), demographic information (including disaggregated gender and housing information) and access to the Public Distribution System (PDS) data were collected through the calls.

In addition to monitoring household food security, WFP has been collecting market information in central and northern governorates of Iraq, using live telephone interviews. In collaboration with Islamic Relief and Muslim Aid, information was obtained between 3 March and 8 April from 53 locations in the governorates of Anbar (10), Ninewa (6), Diyala (17), Kirkuk (12) and Salah Al-Din (8) using a simplified market questionnaire.

Active conflict and insecurity have made some areas inaccessible even by telephone. This introduces an element of bias in the survey that we account for when interpreting the data. Further details on survey methodology are available [online](#).

¹Source: International Organization for Migration. Figures for April 2015.

Table 1: March 2015 food security dashboard for conflict-affected governorates

Governorate	% of respondent households with poor & borderline food consumption (FCS)	% of respondent households using coping strategies	Food basket price in Iraq Dinars (IQD)	Terms of Trade (# of food baskets/ average daily wage)	% of respondent households that have <u>not</u> received Public Distribution System (PDS) rations in February and March
Anbar	4	4	1,493	14	45
Duhok	9	47	1,009	35	38
Kirkuk	8	20	1,121	22	33
Ninewa	9	13	875	20	33
Salah Al-Din	8	8	959	18	17

Source: WFP mVAM

Anbar: The highest food prices and lowest purchasing power were reported in Anbar. PDS access in the area was very limited; the majority of surveyed respondents said they did not receive any PDS (45%) or only partial rations (45%) in February and March.

Duhok: A large IDP influx is undermining food security. Alarmingly, nearly half of the interviewed households – many of whom are IDPs – now engage in negative coping strategies. The proportion of people with poor or borderline food consumption was also relatively higher than other surveyed governorates, at 8.5 percent. PDS access appears to be limited; a large portion of the surveyed population (38 %) did not receive PDS in February and March, and many (47%) received only a partial ration.

Kirkuk: Road blockages are leading to lower PDS distributions, and food prices are high. Supply routes in western and southern areas are reportedly very insecure. Around 8.2 percent of households have poor or borderline food consumption, while 20.4 percent are engaging in negative coping.

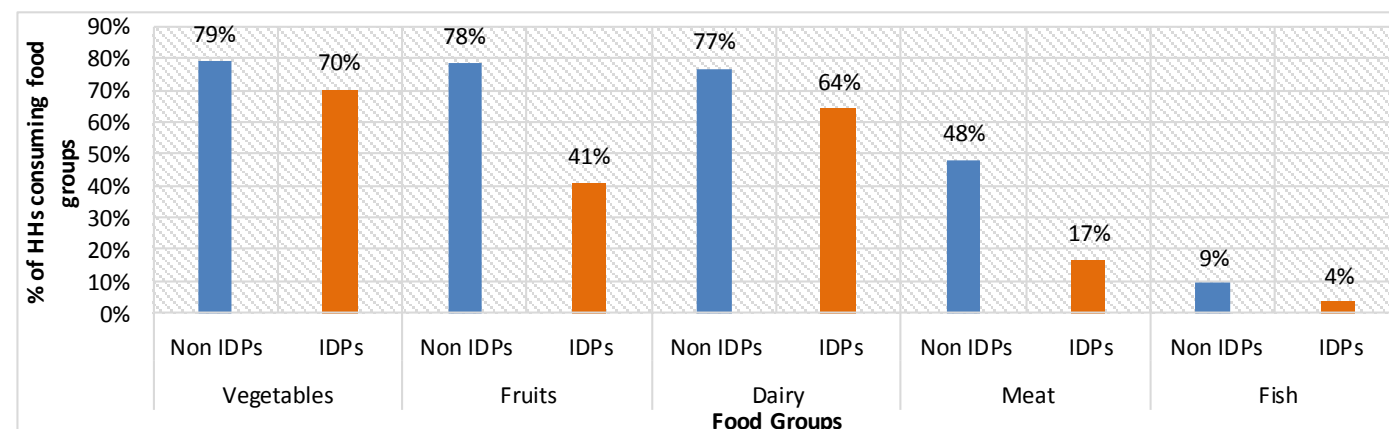
Ninewa: Households' purchasing power is weak because of low wage rates and a lack of employment opportunities, coupled with reduced PDS distributions. An estimated 9.1 percent of households have poor and borderline food consumption, while 13.1 percent are using consumption coping strategies. Displaced households are most vulnerable. Recent conflict in Al-Qosh and Mosul districts could further affect food security.

Salah Al-Din: High food prices coupled with low wage rates are undermining people's purchasing power. Eight percent of households in the governorate have poor or borderline food consumption, while the same percentage are using negative coping strategies. Recent displacement has been reported.

Consumption Patterns in Iraq

The [Food Consumption Score](#) (FCS) is a proxy indicator for food security that measures the dietary diversity and food frequency of household diets, as well as the relative nutritional importance of different food groups. Households are classified as having 'poor', 'borderline' or 'acceptable' food consumption.

Figure 1: Percentage of households consuming a food group more than three times a week



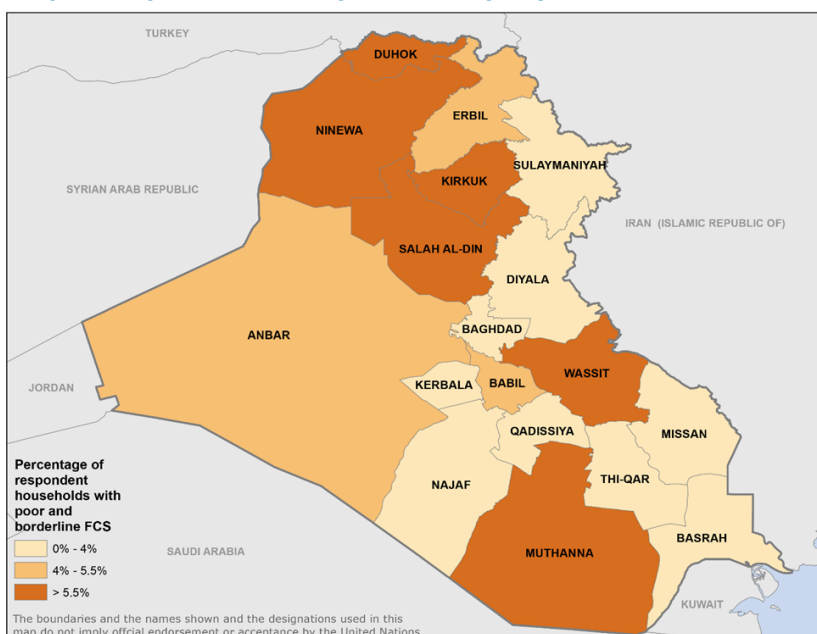
Source: WFP mVAM

mVAM data collected in March 2015 shows that nationally, 96 percent of the surveyed population has acceptable food consumption². Three percent have 'borderline' scores and 1 percent have 'poor' consumption. IDP respondents have a much higher rate of poor and borderline food consumption (10 percent) than non-IDPs (2.7 percent). The survey data shows that IDPs consume high quality foods (such as meat, dairy, fish, fruits and vegetables) much less frequently than non-displaced households (Figure 1)³.

As map 1 shows, governorates most affected by conflict and those with the highest concentration of IDPs have the highest rates of 'poor' and 'borderline' food consumption, including Ninewa (9.1%), Duhok (9.5%), Kirkuk (8.2%) and Salah Al-Din (8%). Results are poorest in areas that have been directly affected by conflict and consequently have faced food scarcity, high food prices and reduced purchasing power because of a lack of job opportunities and low wages.

Other governorates with a high rate of combined poor and borderline FCS are Wassit (11.6%) and Muthanna (10%). While these governorates have not been directly affected by the conflict, they showed high vulnerability to food insecurity in the [2007 Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment \(CFSVA\)](#). These results may reflect chronic food insecurity in these areas.

Map 1: Iraq –Food Consumption Score (FCS) - March 2015

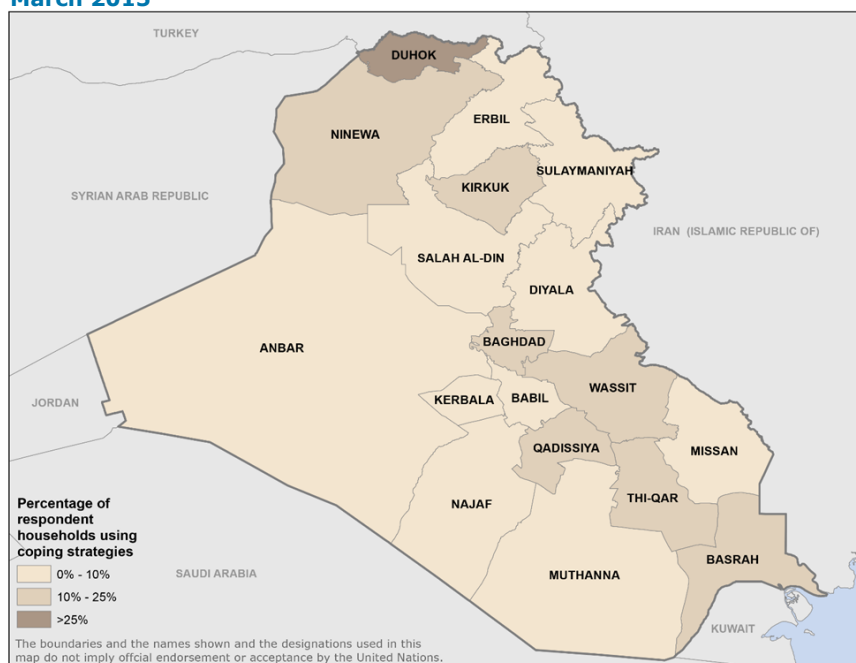


Source: WFP mVAM

IDPs use more negative coping strategies than non-displaced households

Overall, 12.5 percent of respondents said they did not have enough food or money to buy food during the week before the survey, and that they therefore had to resort to food-related negative coping strategies. Around 24 percent of IDP respondents reported using coping strategies compared to 9 percent of non-IDP respondents. IDPs residing in official camps used negative coping strategies most frequently.

Map 2: Iraq – mVAM reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) – March 2015



Source: WFP mVAM

In general, eating cheaper, less preferred foods and limiting meal portions were the types of behaviour most reported by respondents using coping strategies. These are also the strategies most frequently used by IDP respondents. For non-displaced respondents, the most common strategies included eating cheaper/less preferred foods and borrowing food/money from friends and family. IDPs do not report borrowing from friends and family, possibly because their networks and social support have been lost during their displacement and therefore unable to lend assistance to each other. The use of coping strategies is highest in Duhok and Wassit, where many respondents are IDPs.

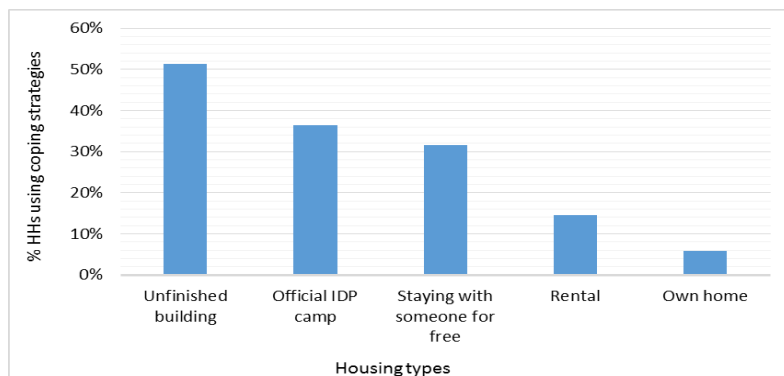
As seen in map 2, Duhok had by far the highest percentage of respondents that reported using consumption-based coping strategies (47%), of which 47 percent are eating cheaper/less preferred foods, and 36

²The mVAM collected data takes into consideration food frequencies from various sources such as purchases, own production, food assistance and host families (for IDPs). These FCS results were calculated using a universal adjusted set of thresholds reflecting the high consumption of oil and sugar in the region (poor≤28, 28<borderline≤42, acceptable>42). For further information see: http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/manual_guide_proced/wfp203197.pdf

³Both findings are statistically significant at 95 percent confidence level.

percent are limiting portion sizes. In Kirkuk, over 20 percent of respondents reported using coping strategies. The coping strategies mainly used are limiting portion size (18%), eating cheaper/less preferred foods (16%) and restricting adults' consumption so that small children can eat (16%). Moreover, just 11 percent of respondents in Kirkuk said they had received a full PDS ration in the last two months, while 33 percent said they did not receive any PDS ration during this time. In Ninewa, 13 percent of households are eating cheaper/less preferred foods and 13 percent are limiting portion sizes: among the strategies used, these the most frequently applied in this governorate. Respondents also reported using more severe coping strategies, such as restricting adults' consumption so that small children can eat (10%) and borrowing food (9%).

Figure 2: Percentage share of households using food-related coping strategies by housing type, March 2015



Source: WFP mVAM

A high correlation was found between respondents' housing situation and their likelihood to resort to coping strategies. Those living in official IDP camps, unfinished buildings or staying with somebody for free are more likely to use negative coping strategies than those living in their own house or rented accommodation (see Figure 2). There was no statistically significant difference in the frequency of using coping strategies between households headed by men and those headed by women.

Markets, food supply and purchasing power are disrupted

[Recent WFP market monitoring](#) in central and northern governorates suggests that the conflict is having an impact on markets. It has severely disrupted supply lines and caused shortages of foods such as fresh fruit, meat, eggs and dairy products.

In March, the price of a standard food basket – providing 2,100 kcal per day – has increased in the areas most exposed to conflict. While the basket cost IQD 928 in Baghdad in March, the same basket was twice as expensive in Ramadi (Anbar). Food prices in Anbar are the highest of all governorates, around 58 percent above the prices in Baghdad.

Food basket, 2100 kcal

- Rice 225g
- Wheat Flour 225g
- Lentils 60g
- Sugar 33g
- Vegetable Oil 30g

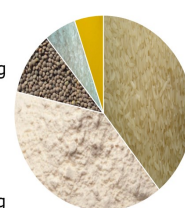
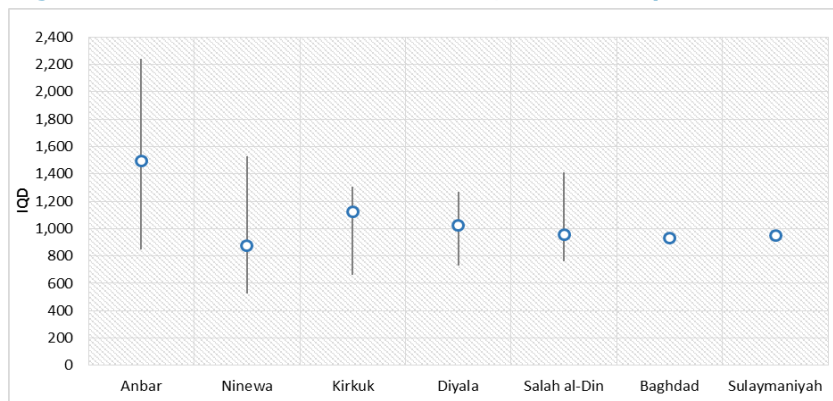


Figure 3: Cost of a standard food basket, March 3 – April 8 2015



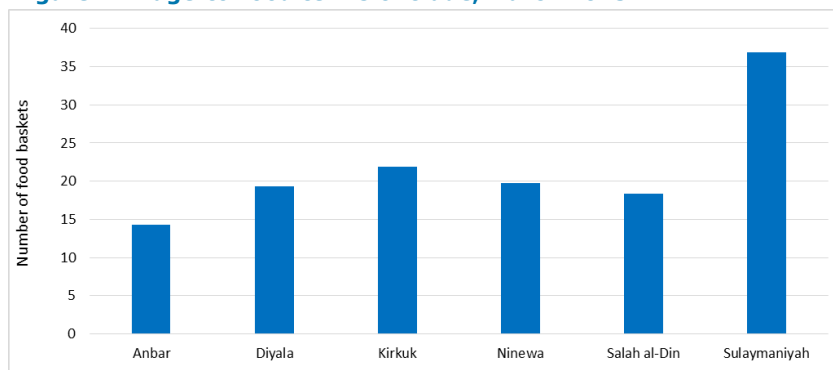
Source: WFP mVAM

Specifically, wheat flour in Anbar cost almost 2.5 times more than in Baghdad. In conflict-affected parts of Anbar, such as Ramadi, where many road supply corridors are closed, people also report shortages of sugar and cooking gas. The price of wheat flour in Kirkuk was twice that of Baghdad in March. Reduced distributions of PDS wheat flour may be keeping wheat flour prices high in conflict-affected governorates.

Food prices are highly variable in Ninewa: they are low in locations where roads are safe, and high elsewhere. Interestingly, in Diyala, the price of the standard food basket was close to that in Baghdad, thanks to good road access. This could explain the relatively favourable food consumption indicators that were reported in Diyala in March. Improved road access to Kirkuk in late March and early April seems to have already translated into lower food prices in the governorate (figure 3).

The conflict has affected job opportunities. Daily wage rates for unskilled labour vary from IQD 25-30,000 in Baghdad to IQD 35,000 in Sulaymaniyah. By contrast, wage levels are down to IQD 20-25,000 a day in conflict-affected Anbar, Diyala and Kirkuk. In Ninewa,

Figure 4: Wage-to-food terms of trade, March 2015



Source: WFP mVAM

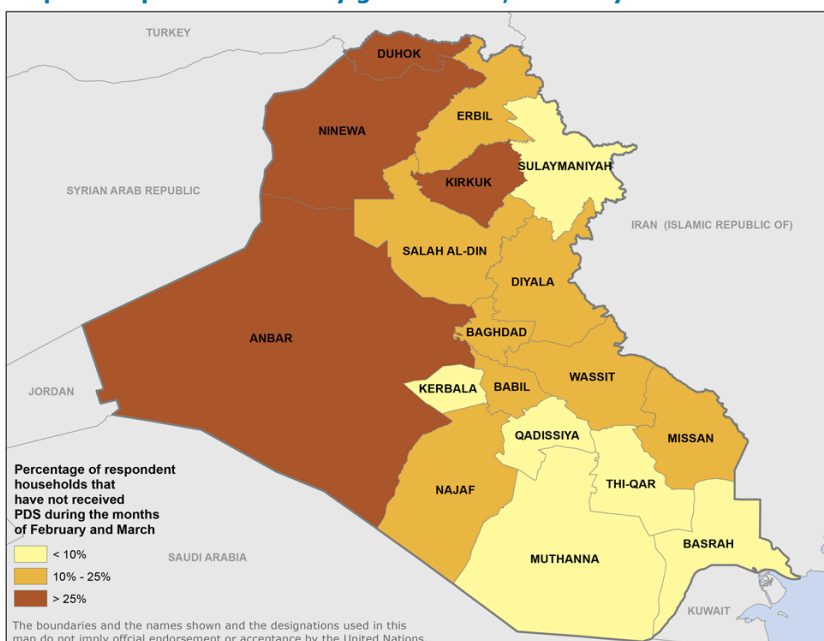
a daily wage rate of IQD 15,000 was reported in March. Coupled with high food prices, low wages are limiting people's ability to purchase an adequate diet. As figure 4 shows, terms of trade – the number of food baskets that can be purchased at the prevailing wage – are 40-50 percent lower in conflict-affected governorates than in Sulaymaniyah. Data for March show that Anbar had the lowest purchasing power, followed by Salah Al-Din, Diyala, Ninewa and Kirkuk.

Disruptions to the PDS have impacted supply, influencing households' food access. Although over 80 percent of households have received PDS rations in February and March 2015, most have received partial rations. Slightly over 10% of respondents reported having received a full PDS ration. Moreover, a substantial portion (19%) also said they did not receive any PDS during this period. Overall, compared to other respondents, IDPs appear to have lower access to PDS rations.

Map 3 shows the percentage of the surveyed population who did not receive any PDS ration in February and in March. The responses reveal important geographical disparities, particularly in governorates directly affected by conflict and displacement, where a large portion of respondents has received no PDS entitlements at all in February and in March. The highest rates of zero PDS access are reported in Anbar, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Duhok. In Anbar, nearly half of the respondent households noted they did not receive any PDS rations, which is likely due to conflict-induced insecurity and the closure of main supply corridors. In Duhok, where there is a relatively high concentration of IDPs, a large portion of the surveyed population (38%) did not receive a PDS ration and many (47%) received only a partial ration in February and March. Also in Kirkuk and Ninewa, which have recently faced conflict and road closures, over a third of respondent households in both governorates did not receive PDS rations during this time.

In comparison, within governorates in the south as well as in Sulaymaniyah, access to PDS appears relatively high: over 90 percent of respondents in these areas reported having received a full or partial ration during the last two months.

Map 3: Iraq – PDS access by governorate, February–March 2015



Source: WFP mVAM

Conclusion

The mVAM March survey data suggest that a combination of higher food prices, declining purchasing power, displacement and the reduced availability of PDS rations has undermined food security in conflict-affected zones of Iraq. The data indicates that the conflict has had a large impact on the food security of the country's 2.6 million IDPs. Compared to non-displaced households, IDPs consume lower quality diets, they resort to more negative coping strategies and they appear to have lower access to PDS rations. Markets have been disrupted in conflict zones, with higher prices eroding household incomes and purchasing power. PDS deliveries have been hampered by insecurity and limited road access, further deteriorating the food security situation.



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