



World Food Programme

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Bulletin 7 – June 2015

IRAQ

June 2015: Food consumption deteriorates in Anbar

Highlights

- In May, continuing conflict caused massive displacement and increased food insecurity in parts of Iraq; 257,000 people have been displaced from Ramadi and neighbouring districts.
- Food security indicators were poorer for internally displaced persons (IDPs), and particularly for people living in unfinished housing and in camps. In May, IDPs consumed fewer protein-rich foods such as meat, eggs and dairy, compared to previous months. Half of displaced households reported lacking food, or the money to buy food, in the week before the survey.
- In May, the price of a standard food basket dropped by 10–20 percent in most markets in central and northern governorates. The purchasing power also improved, yet it still remains particularly weak in Anbar.
- Public Distribution System (PDS) supplies could have played a price stabilization role in conflict zones. While overall PDS distributions of wheat flour and rice improved in May, low access continued to contribute to food access difficulties for many households.

Conflict continued in May

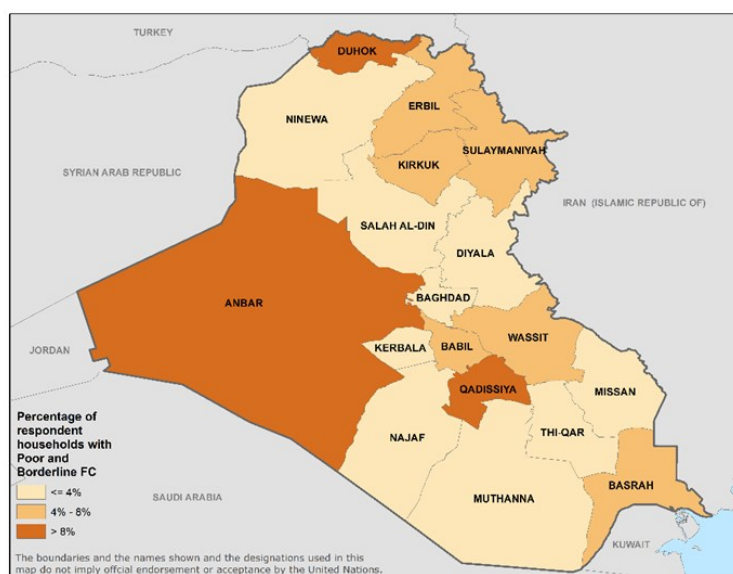
Intense armed conflict continued throughout May, with particularly severe violence in Anbar. Clashes erupted in mid-April around Ramadi, the regional capital of Anbar governorate, and the city eventually fell under the control of armed groups in mid-May. Since the launch of military operations in Anbar on 8 April, more than 257,000 people have been displaced from Ramadi and its neighbouring districts, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Clashes have taken place around Al Khalidiya, Al Karmah and Al Habbaniyah; most people have fled from these areas to Amiriyat al Fallujah, Baghdad and other districts across Anbar. Likewise, the situation in besieged Haditha and Heet appears to be deteriorating: civilians have reported a rise in violence and a lack of access to food supplies (OCHA Iraq Crisis Situation Reports [No. 44: 13-19 May, 2015](#) / [No. 45: 20-26 May, 2015](#)).

IDPs continue to face major risks because of restrictions on movement and access to safe places, grounded in sectarian tensions and fear of further advances by militants. This in turn affects their access to basic services and hygiene. The number of IDPs is expected to rise in Anbar and Ninewa because of the prolonged violence in the area. Most IDPs are from these two governorates: 36 percent of all IDPs are from Anbar and 35 percent are from Ninewa (IOM).

Food consumption patterns in Iraq

The [Food Consumption Score](#) (FCS) is a proxy indicator for food security that measures the diversity of household diets, and how frequently food is consumed. The FCS classifies households as having 'poor', 'borderline' or 'acceptable' food consumption.

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



Source: WFP mVAM, May 2015



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vam

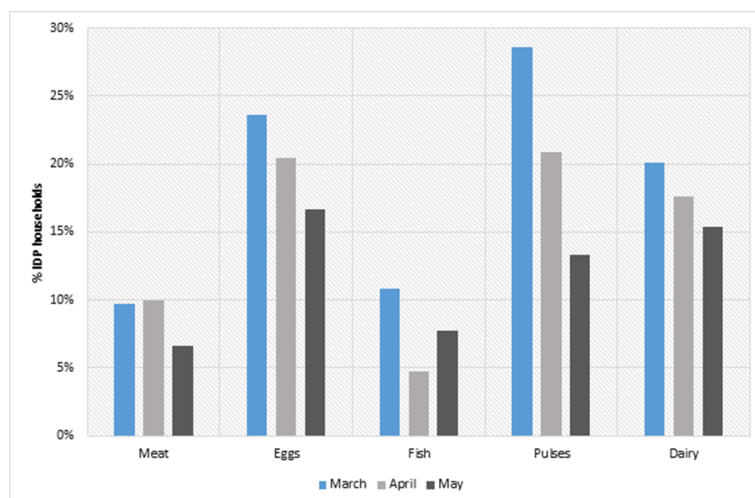
food security analysis

Approximately 5 percent of all surveyed households had a 'poor' or 'borderline' diet in May, a slight rise compared with April (4.1%). IDPs continue to be considerably worse off than non-displaced households. In May, 15.7 percent of surveyed IDP households had 'poor' or 'borderline' food consumption, compared to 3 percent of non-displaced households. With regard to living conditions, households consuming 'poor' and 'borderline' diets were most commonly living in unfinished buildings (17.1%) and IDPs camps (16.5%).

In May, respondents from Anbar governorate had the highest rate of 'poor' and 'borderline' food consumption (17.7%). This trend is certainly due to the latest wave of fighting and large-scale displacement, which began in April and continued throughout May. As shown in Map 1, other governorates where respondents reported high rates of 'poor' and 'borderline' consumption in May include Qadisiya (14%) and Duhok (12.8%).

IDPs seem to have consumed protein-rich foods (including meat, eggs and dairy) less frequently in May compared to previous months. As shown in Figure 1, only 25–30 percent of displaced households consume protein-rich foods at least three times a week compared to 80–90 percent of non-displaced households. The dietary diversity of IDP households is therefore far below that of non-displaced households.

Figure 1: Percentage of IDP households consuming a food item at least three times a week



Source: WFP mVAM, May 2015

The most vulnerable are employing more negative coping strategies

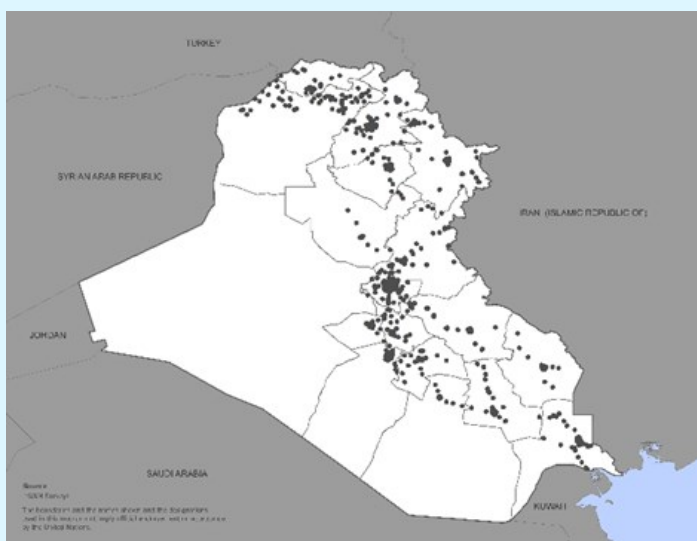
In May, 10.5 percent of all survey respondents reported not having enough food, or enough money to buy food, during the week before the survey. This is a slight increase from what was reported in April (9.7%). As shown in Map 3, more households used coping strategies in governorates with relatively high IDP concentrations, such as Duhok (28.2%); in conflict-affected governorates such as Ninewa (15.6%) and Diyala (14%); and in zones exposed to chronic food insecurity in the south, such as Babil (25%), Wassit (22%) and Thi-Qar (18.3%).

One in three IDP households (34.3%) reported using at least one coping strategy in the week before the survey, underlining how difficult food access is for this group. By comparison, only 7.5 percent of non-displaced households used coping strategies.

Methodology - mVAM remote data collection

In May 2015, WFP's mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping team (mVAM) conducted the third round of household food security monitoring using live telephone interviews throughout Iraq. Data was collected from a sample of 1,202 respondents from all 18 governorates, in partnership with the Korek mobile network operator. WFP is monitoring a panel of respondents drawn from Korek's database based on WFP's instructions and geographic sampling distribution across Iraq (see Map 2).

Map 2. Iraq mVAM data collection - May 2015



Source: WFP mVAM, May 2015

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 in May from 59 locations in the governorates of Anbar (19), Ninewa (10), Diyala (13), Kirkuk (10) and Salah Al-Din (7) using a simplified market questionnaire.

Map 2 shows the cellphone towers from which live telephone interviews responses were received. Further details on survey methodology are available [online](#).

Households living in poorer housing conditions remain most vulnerable and continue to use negative coping strategies more than those living in proper housing: 55 percent of all surveyed households who reported using food-based coping live in IDP camps and 40 percent live in unfinished buildings.

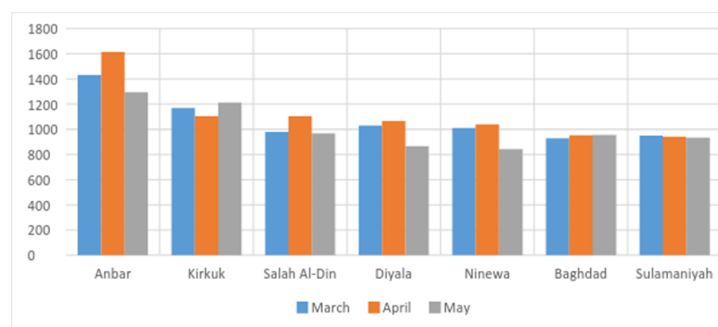
Markets, food supply and purchasing power

Market data collected in May shows an overall decrease in food prices compared to [WFP market monitoring in April](#). The price of most basic food basket items fell in almost all monitored governorates by 10–20 percent, except in Kirkuk where prices increased slightly (Figure 2). However, while average food prices appear to have decreased at governorate level, there have been notable local variations and price increases in areas directly affected by conflict.

Based on food price data collected in May, the average cost of a standard food basket in Anbar stood at IQD 1295, which is 20 percent lower than the average price observed in April, and 10 percent lower than the average price in March. The price spike observed in Anbar in April may be linked to the initial launch of military operations and renewed clashes in the area at the beginning of the month. However, other factors may also have played a role (see Box 1). Though prices appear to have dropped at governorate level in May, they remained well above average prices in Baghdad. In particular, wheat flour costs 114 percent more than in the capital, and sugar 82 percent more.

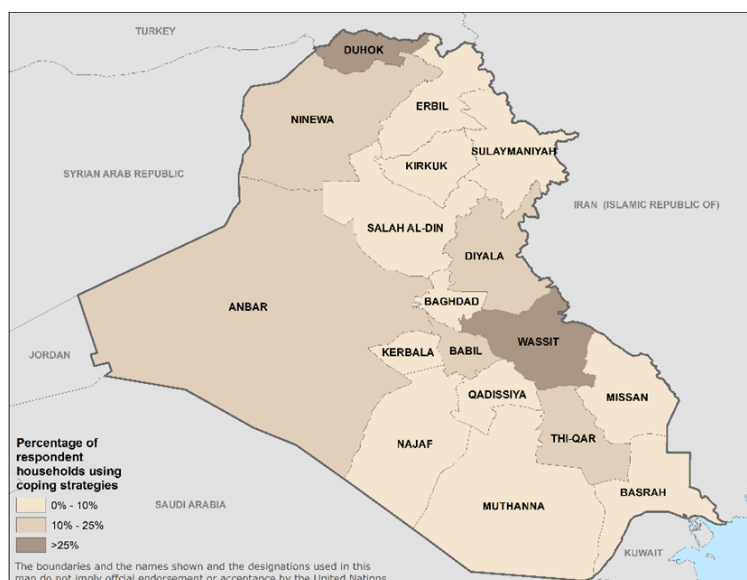
Also, data suggests notable variation in the cost of a standard food basket at district level – especially in conflict-affected Haditha and Ramadi districts where the average prices reported for basic food basket items were significantly higher than the overall governorate average: in Haditha, the food basket cost IQD 10,000 in May and in Ramadi, IQD 1383. Haditha is sieged and is the last major city in Anbar still under government control. It remains quite isolated with restricted access to supply routes, leading to extremely high food prices and shortages of food items, especially wheat flour and vegetable oil.

Figure 2: Cost of a standard food basket, comparison of March, April and May 2015



Source: WFP mVAM, May 2015

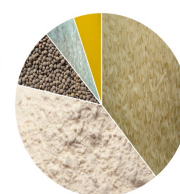
Map 3: Iraq – reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) - May 2015



Source: WFP mVAM, May 2015

Food basket, 2100 kcal

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



In May, the average price of a food basket reported in Kirkuk (IQD 1213) was second highest of all monitored governorates—27 percent higher than in Baghdad. In most surveyed locations in Kirkuk, the cost of a food basket varied between IQD 858 and IQD 1386. However, the cost of a standard food basket has reached IQD 2783 in Hawijah – a town held by armed groups – most likely because of the recent conflict and air strikes that the city has seen. In Ninewa, average food prices were relatively moderate during May, varying between IQD 560 and IQD 980. In Mosul, a food basket cost IQD 1058 – more than in other areas of Ninewa, but low by national standards. In Salah Al-Din, high wheat and sugar prices are noted: the price of sugar in Salah Al-Din increased by 58 percent in May alone.

Box 1. PDS supplies play a role in price stabilization in conflict areas

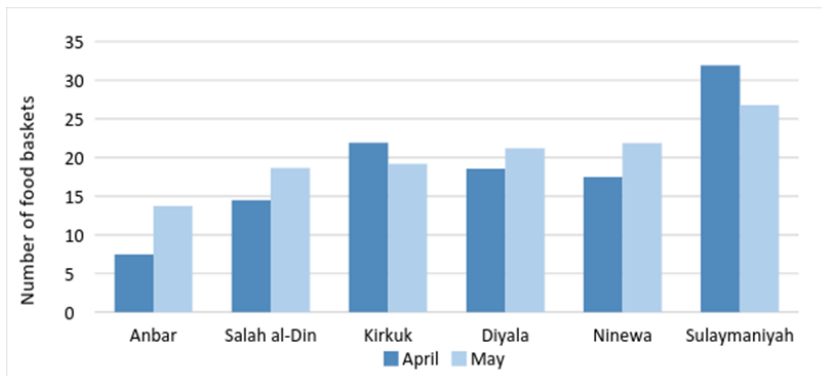
Numerous factors make assigning causality to the recent food basket price changes difficult. In general, prices change over time to reflect both supply and demand, as well as competitive factors present in a particular market setting. However other factors, particularly in the short-term, can affect price movement. Concerns over the future availability of food and income to make purchases can strongly affect market behaviour. All of these factors are present in Iraq, as some areas are facing increasing levels of insecurity, while the situation has improved in others. When food basket price increases or decreases are correlated with overall changes in governorate PDS deliveries, a very mixed picture emerges. mVAM market data suggests that in areas outside conflict zones with free access to private sector food supplies, PDS deliveries do not have a significant influence on stabilizing market food prices. Conversely, PDS supplies do play a role in price stabilization in conflict areas.

Overall PDS performance as reflected in deliveries of wheat flour and rice as a percentage of national requirements improved during May. This was primarily the result of increased deliveries of PDS rice across Iraq. PDS rice deliveries reached 60 percent of requirements in the last month. Wheat deliveries also improved but May deliveries met just 43 percent of requirements.

Observed price decreases for wheat flour may also be related to the start of the winter-crop harvest, which started in mid-May and will continue until mid-July. However, the agricultural season was significantly hampered by the conflict, particularly in the northern parts of the country which normally contribute a large share of wheat production.

Based on the average cost of the food basket and manual wage rates reported in May, the data shows that purchasing power has improved in nearly all monitored governorates compared with April (Figure 3). While terms of trade in Anbar improved from April to May, they remain the lowest of all monitored governorates. In Anbar, unskilled labourers can purchase 14 food baskets with their daily wage, compared with about 19 baskets in Salah Al-Din and Kirkuk, 21 in Diyala, 22 in Ninewa and 27 in Sulaymaniyah. Daily wages in Anbar have slightly improved, rising from IQD 10,000–25,000 in April to IQD 10,000–30,000 in May. However, employment opportunities seem very limited as over a quarter of monitored locations reported that no work is available.

Figure 3: Wage-to-food terms of trade, March and April 2015



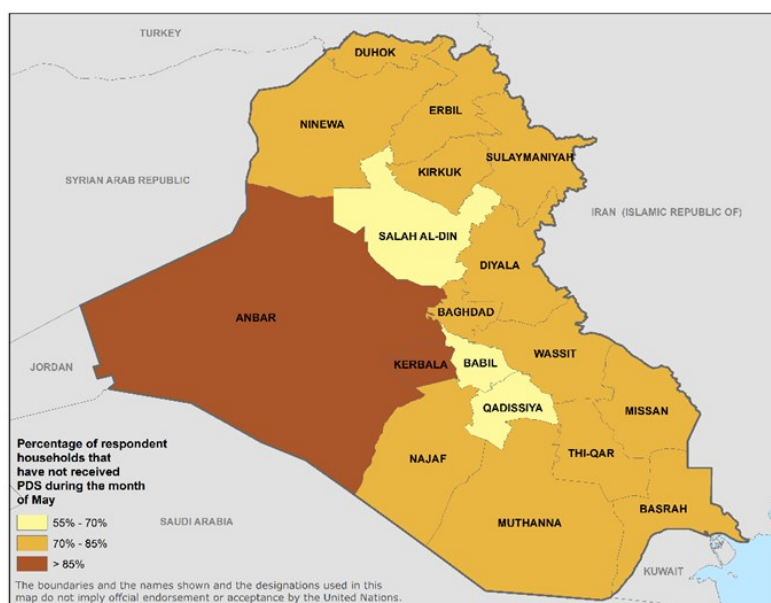
Source: WFP mVAM, May 2015

Table 1: PDS monthly ration composition

| Commodity | Quantity |
|---------------|----------|
| Wheat flour | 9 kg |
| Rice | 3 kg |
| Sugar | 2 kg |
| Vegetable oil | 1 litre |

As in the previous month, four out of five respondents reported that they did not receive any PDS allocation. Only 8.25 percent of households received a full ration in May (see Table 1). Around 15 percent said they had received a partial ration. Of households receiving a partial ration, the most common food combination was a ration including rice and vegetable oil (27% of recipients of a partial ration) or rice and sugar (13% of recipients). This seems to confirm restricted PDS delivery of wheat flour.

Map 4: PDS access by governorate, May 2015



Source: WFP mVAM, May 2015

Conclusion

Although food prices have fallen and manual labour wage rates appear to have risen slightly over the past month, the food security situation in conflict-affected areas of Iraq remains strained, particularly in Anbar and for those who have been displaced by the most recent wave of conflict. IDPs are increasingly vulnerable to food insecurity: half of those surveyed reported resorting to food-based coping strategies and consuming less protein-rich foods in May. Moreover, limited PDS access and disrupted supply routes persist, contributing to restricted food supply and difficult food access for households.

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