



World Food Programme

## Bulletin 9 – August 2015

# IRAQ

**August 2015: Although access to food improves, a record high percentage resort to negative coping**

## Highlights

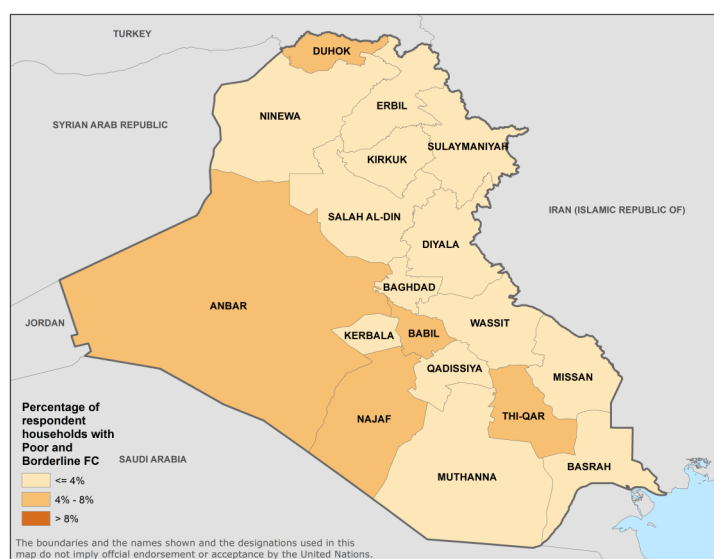
- **Household food consumption improved in July compared to June, particularly among internally-displaced people (IDPs) and households residing in Anbar governorate. This improvement was likely attributed to the holy month of Ramadan, when people try to eat more complete and better-quality meals, and often share meals with less fortunate family and friends, thereby improving overall dietary diversity.**
- **Still, a record-high number of respondents said they did not have enough food or money to buy food in July, resulting in a higher national percentage of people employing negative food-related coping strategies.**
- **There was a significant reduction in the proportion of IDP respondents that reported resorting to negative coping in July (26%) compared with June (40%). This is partially explained by the giving and sharing tradition practiced during Ramadan.**
- **The overall price of a standard food basket decreased by 5-22 percent and wage-to-food terms of trade increased by 12-40 percent between June and July in all monitored governorates. Although in Anbar governorate, household purchasing power improved for the third consecutive month, food prices remained extremely high in conflict-affected locations, such as Haditha, Al-Habbaniyah and Al-Khalidiyah.**
- **Household access to the Public Distribution System (PDS) deliveries showed signs of improvement as more respondents reported receiving a full or partial ration in July compared with June.**

## 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.

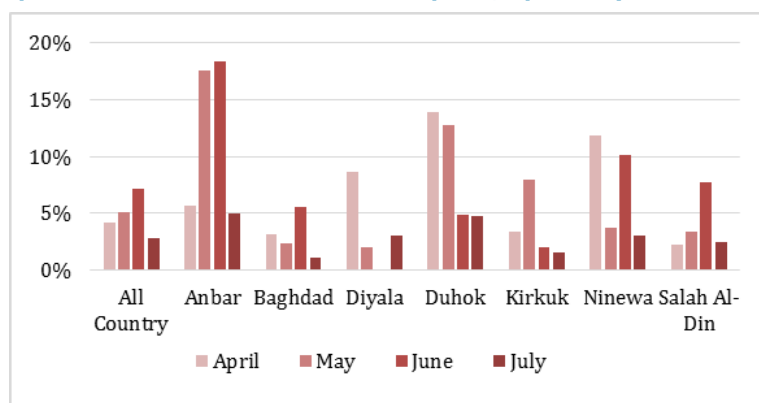
The latest mVAM data indicates that there was a fall in unacceptable ('poor' and 'borderline') food consumption among respondents across Iraq during July (Map 1). This trend was particularly evident in Anbar, where the percentage of all surveyed households with unacceptable consumption fell from the high prevalence observed in May (17.6%) and June (18.3%) to 5 percent in July\*\*, which is similar to results seen in April before the outbreak of the latest wave of conflict and mass displacement. This decrease was also seen, to a lesser extent, in Baghdad where the prevalence of unacceptable consumption decreased from 6 percent in June to 1 percent in July\* (Figure 1.a).

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



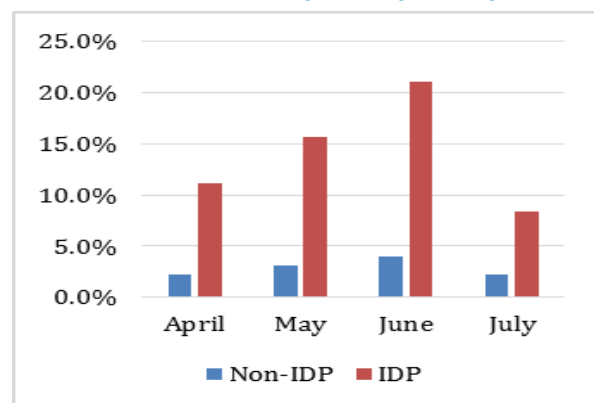
Source: WFP mVAM, July 2015

**Figure 1.a Percentage of all respondents, and respondents from key conflict and displacement-affected governorates with 'poor' and 'borderline' food consumption, April–July 2015**



Source: WFP mVAM, July 2015

**Figure 1.b Percentage of non-IDP and IDP respondent households with 'poor' and 'borderline' food consumption, April–July 2015**

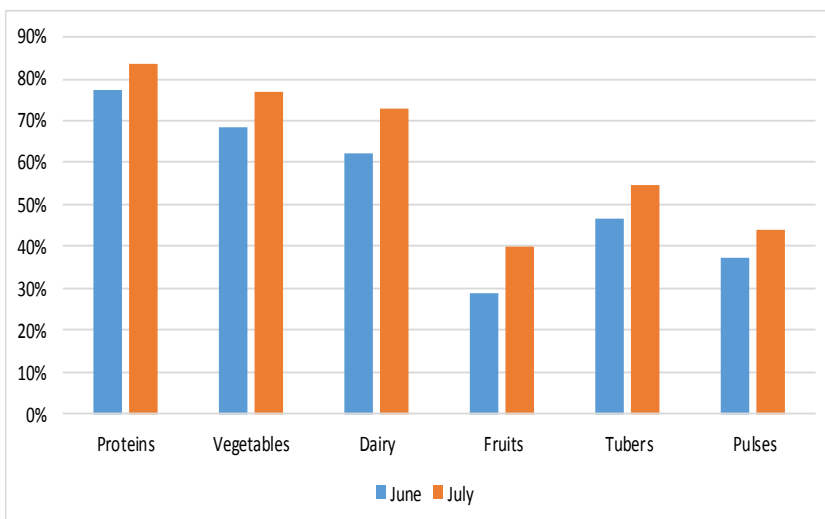


Source: WFP mVAM, July 2015

This decrease was likely influenced by the observance of the holy month of Ramadan, when people tend to eat more complete and better-quality meals that they often share with family and friends, thereby improving overall dietary diversity.

The data also shows that the proportion of IDP households with 'poor' or 'borderline' consumption dropped from 21 percent in June\*\* to 8.4 percent in July (Figure 1.b). IDPs reported a significant increase in consumption of most monitored food items during this time (Figure 2). However, it is worth emphasizing that despite this improvement, the overall dietary diversity remained much better for non-displaced households than for IDPs.

**Figure 2: Percentage of IDP respondents consuming a food group more than three times a week, June and July 2015**



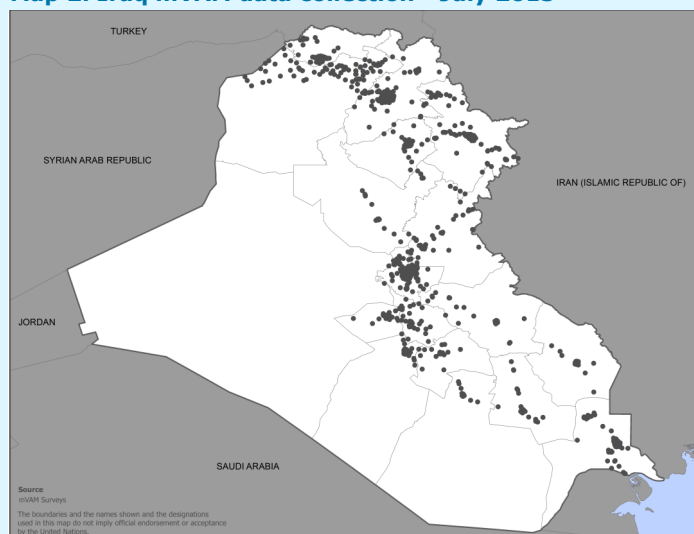
Source: WFP mVAM, July 2015

### Methodology - mVAM remote data collection

In July 2015, mVAM conducted the fifth round of household food security monitoring using live telephone interviews throughout Iraq. Data was collected from a sample of 1,549 respondents, through Korek, a major mobile network operator. WFP is monitoring a panel of respondents drawn from Korek's database living in Iraq's 18 governorates. Map 2 shows the cellphone towers from which live telephone interview responses were received. Further details on survey methodology are available [online](#).

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 July from 58 locations in the governorates of Anbar (14), Ninewa (5), Diyala (11), Kirkuk (16) and Salah Al-Din (12) using a simplified market questionnaire.

**Map 2. Iraq mVAM data collection - July 2015**



Source: WFP mVAM, July 2015

## Consumption-based coping reaches a new high

The data shows that consumption-based coping continued to increase during July ('All country' on Figure 3). A record-high 15.5 percent of all surveyed respondents said that they did not have enough food or money to buy food in the week before the survey. Therefore, they to resort to food-related negative coping strategies, which shows a steady increase from the survey results of June (13.2%) and May (10.6%).

At governorate-level, a significant increase in food related coping from June to July was also reported by respondents from Baghdad (18.5%)\*, Basrah (22.7%)\*, Diyala (20.1%)\*, Kerbala (18%)\* and Sulaymaniyah (10.4%)\*. This trend has persisted in all of these governorates since May, with the exception of Diyala.

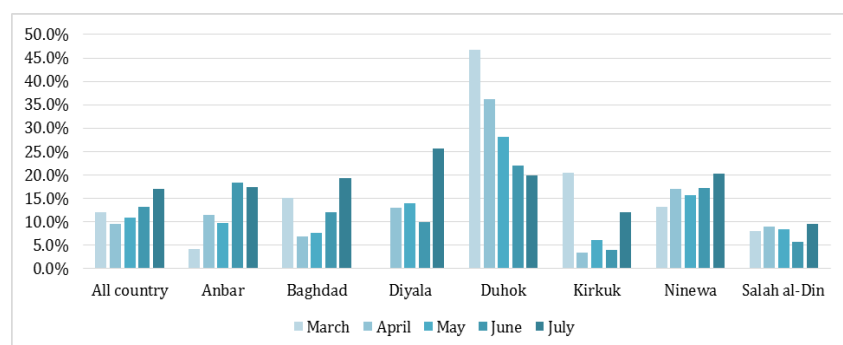
Figure 4 show a significant reduction in the proportion of IDP respondents that reported resorting to negative coping in July (26%) compared with June (40%)\*. By contrast, non-displaced respondents reported a slight increase in coping during July (13%) compared with June (9%)\*. However, the overall prevalence of coping among the non-displaced remained significantly lower than that of IDPs.

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



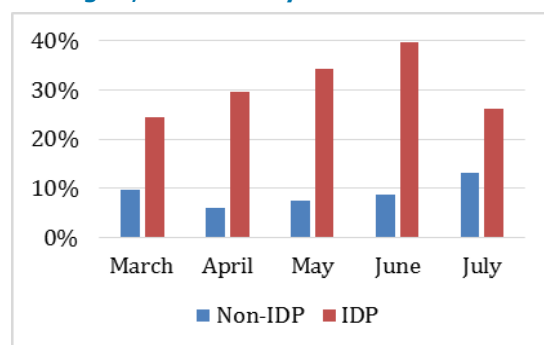
Source: WFP mVAM, July 2015

**Figure 3: Percentage of all respondents, and respondents from key conflict and displacement-affected governorates using consumption based coping strategies, March – July 2015**



Source: WFP mVAM, July 2015

**Figure 4: Percentage of all non-IDP and IDP respondents using consumption based coping strategies, March – July 2015**



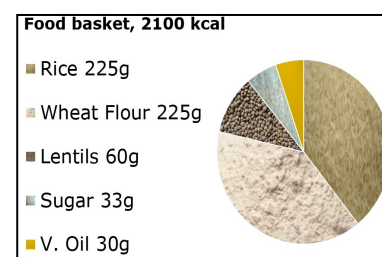
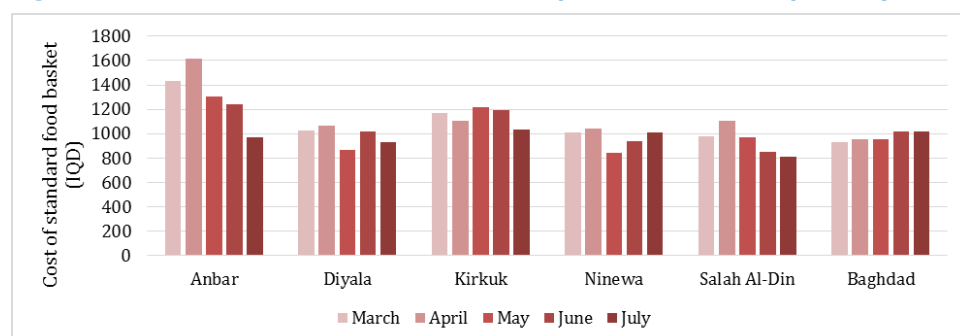
Source: WFP mVAM, July 2015

In general, receiving help from family and friends was the most common means of coping in July, reported by 11.5 percent of all respondents using coping strategies.

## Markets, food supply and purchasing power

The overall cost of a standard food basket decreased by 5-22 percent in July compared to [June](#) in all monitored governorates, except for Ninewa. The cost of a food basket decreased in Anbar, Kirkuk, Diyala and Salah Al-Din by 22, 13, 9, and 5 percent respectively, while in Ninewa it increased by 8 percent. As shown in Figure 5, prices in Anbar and Salah Al-Din have been following a declining trend since April. Currently, the average cost of a standard food basket in all monitored locations is converging with the average cost in Baghdad (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Cost of a standard food basket, comparison of March, April, May, June and July 2015**



Source: WFP mVAM, July 2015

However, high prices for specific food commodities such as wheat flour, sugar and vegetable oil were noted in almost all monitored governorates when compared with Baghdad (Table 1). It is worth noting that wheat flour prices were substantially higher in Kirkuk and Diyala than in Baghdad in spite of nearly full PDS wheat flour allocation in both governorates in July. This may reflect that PDS flour was low quality and that recipients may instead have turned to the market to meet their supply needs rather than accept it. To this end, the Ministry of Trade has recently issued a wheat tender, likely in response to the need to address wheat flour quality.

**Table 1. Commodity price differentials with Baghdad, July 2015 (IQD)**

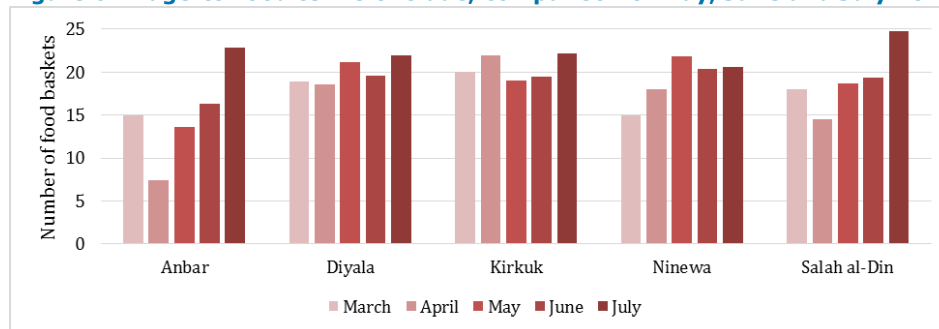
Commodity	Anbar	Diyala	Kirkuk	Ninewa
Rice	-13%	-15%	-10%	-3%
Wheat flour	32%	21%	52%	24%
Lentils	-33%	-28%	-24%	-26%
Sugar	32%	5%	37%	16%
Vegetable oil	22%	11%	11%	13%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>-4%</b>	<b>-9%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>-1%</b>

Source: WFP mVAM, July 2015

In some conflict-affected districts of Anbar, the cost of a basic food basket was about 35-40 percent higher than the overall governorate average, particularly in Al-Habbaniyah (IQD 1500) and Al-Khalidiyah (IQD 1600) districts. Food prices in Haditha district of Anbar continued to be exceptionally high; in July the average reported cost of a basic food basket in the district was five times the overall average recorded for Anbar, at IQD 5148.

Reported average daily wage rates increased in July and consequently so did the overall purchasing power of households, by 12-40 percent in all monitored locations, especially in Anbar and Salah al-Din. The decrease in food prices and rise in daily wage rates permitted people to purchase at least 20 food baskets during the month in all monitored governorates, which is highest number reported since monitoring began in March for all monitored governorates, except Ninewa (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Wage-to-food terms of trade, comparison of May, June and July 2015**



Source: WFP mVAM, July 2015

In Anbar, the average daily wage rates for unskilled labour increased from 20250 IQD in June to 22260 IQD in July, and wage-to-food terms of trade was 1.4 times higher in July than in June, which likely contributed to improving food access and consumption of monitored households during this period.

### PDS access showed signs of improvement

The percentage of surveyed respondents that reported having received a full PDS ration increased in all governorates between June and July. The same trend was seen in some southern governorates where respondents reported an increase in partial PDS. Conversely, a smaller portion of respondents reported not receiving any PDS in July compared to June.

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