



World Food Programme

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## Bulletin 6 – May 2015

# IRAQ

May 2015: Food security worsens for IDPs in Anbar as conflict and displacement increase

## Highlights

- **Food security is of particular concern for areas that were directly affected by conflict and displacement in April, including the governorates of Anbar, Duhok, Ninewa and Diyala. Vulnerability is highest amongst people who have been displaced, those who have received no public distribution system (PDS) ration and those living in unfinished buildings, camps, host communities or rented accommodation.**
- **Anbar, Duhok and Ninewa – which have large numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) – had the highest rates of poor and borderline food consumption (20 – 33%), and the highest rate of negative coping.**
- **IDPs in Anbar – who have been recently displaced – are highly vulnerable to food insecurity: one third have a borderline diet.**
- **Compared to March, food prices increased in April, particularly in conflict-affected Anbar (+28%) and Salah-al-Din (+18%). Falling wages further reduced purchasing power. Over 80 percent of all respondents did not receive any PDS rations in April.**

In April, the intensifying conflict across Iraq affected food security for Iraqis. Ramadi (Anbar governorate) witnessed an upsurge in violence and displacement; 114,000 people were displaced from the city by the end of the month ([OCHA Iraq Crisis Situation Report No. 41: 22-28 April 2015](#)). The governorates receiving the highest number of IDPs from Ramadi were Anbar, Baghdad, Babylon and Sulaymaniyah ([International Organization for Migration \(IOM\) Iraq Displacement Tracking Matrix \(DTM\), April 2015](#)). Attacks targeting civilians and economic resources also occurred in parts of Baghdad, Diyala and Salah Al-Din.

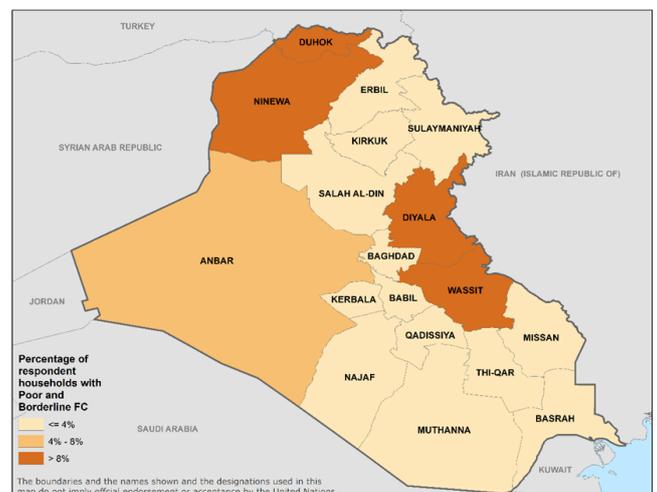
Many IDPs are denied access to governorates that have announced reaching full capacity and because of perceived security risks. In addition to the direct impact the conflict has had on the economy and the livelihoods, shelter and health of the displaced, many IDP households are no longer able to obtain their PDS entitlements because the Ministry of Trade requires them to re-register. The impact of these events is evident in the results of the mVAM data collected in April in these governorates, which shows that food security is deteriorating.

## Food consumption patterns in Iraq

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

mVAM data suggests that nationally, food consumption patterns in Iraq remained stable in April compared to March. However, food security continues to be of concern for areas that were directly affected by conflict and displacement. As shown in Map 1, the highest rates of 'poor' and 'borderline' food consumption were observed for respondents in governorates that were directly affected by the latest wave of conflict and displacement during the reporting period: these are Duhok (13.9%), Ninewa (10.5%), Diyala (8.7%) and Anbar (5.7%). In Diyala, the number of food-insecure respondents rose in

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



Source: WFP mVAM, April 2015

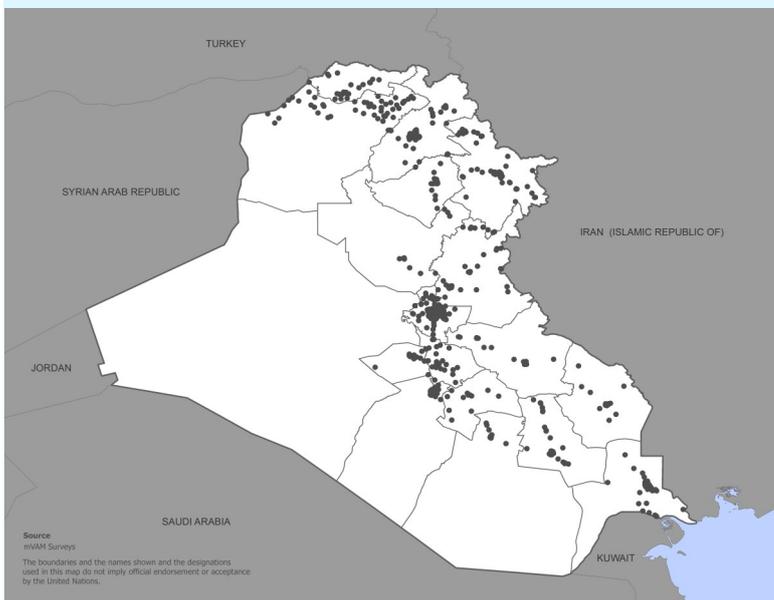
April, which coincides with an influx of returnees who are living in precarious conditions (IOM Iraq Displacement Tracking Matrix, April 2015).

As in March, the current data indicates that IDPs continue to have considerably worse food consumption than non-IDPs. This is especially evident in governorates with relatively high IDP concentrations. In these governorates, mVAM results show a significant disparity between the rates of 'poor' and 'borderline' food consumption of IDP and non-IDP respondents – particularly in Anbar where 33 percent of IDPs had 'borderline' consumption, while all non-IDP respondents had 'acceptable' consumption. In Duhok, 23.8 percent of IDPs had 'poor' (14.3%) or 'borderline' (9.5%) consumption, while all non-IDPs had 'acceptable' consumption. Meanwhile, in Ninewa, 20.6 percent of IDPs had 'poor' (14.3%) or 'borderline' (9.5%) consumption, compared to just 2.4 percent of non-IDP respondents.

### Methodology - mVAM remote data collection

In April 2015, WFP's mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping team (mVAM) conducted the second round of household food security monitoring using live telephone interviews throughout Iraq. Data was collected from a sample of 1,100 respondents from all 18 governorates, with the help of 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 - April 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 April from 47 locations in the governorates of Anbar (12), Ninewa (7), Diyala (13), Kirkuk (10) and Salah Al-Din (5) 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. Map 1 shows the cellphone towers from which live telephone interviews responses were received. Further details on survey methodology are available [online](#).

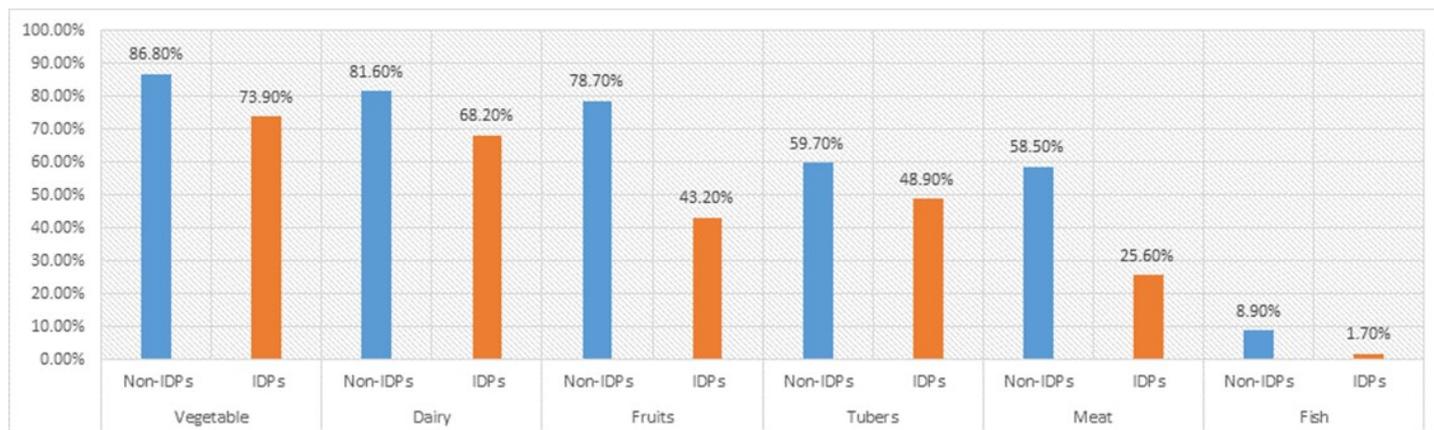
Source: WFP mVAM, April 2015

### Box 1: Linear Regression Analysis

Linear regression models were used to examine the relationship between the Food Consumption Score (FCS) and other measured variables, while controlling for sources of bias such as operator effects. Variables considered include respondent age, gender of the head of household, governorate, IDP status, PDS ration size (full, partial, or none), and residence housing type. Respondent age and the gender of the head of the household displayed no significant relationship with FCS. However, governorate, IDP status, PDS ration size and housing type were all found to have statistically significant associations. Specifically, decreases in average food consumption were associated with residents of Kirkuk and Ninewa; respondents who have been displaced; families who are renting or living in unfinished buildings; and those who are not receiving PDS.

Overall, IDP respondents continue to have a lower consumption of most of food items, especially meat and fruit (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Percentage of IDP and non-IDP households consuming a food group more than three times a week**



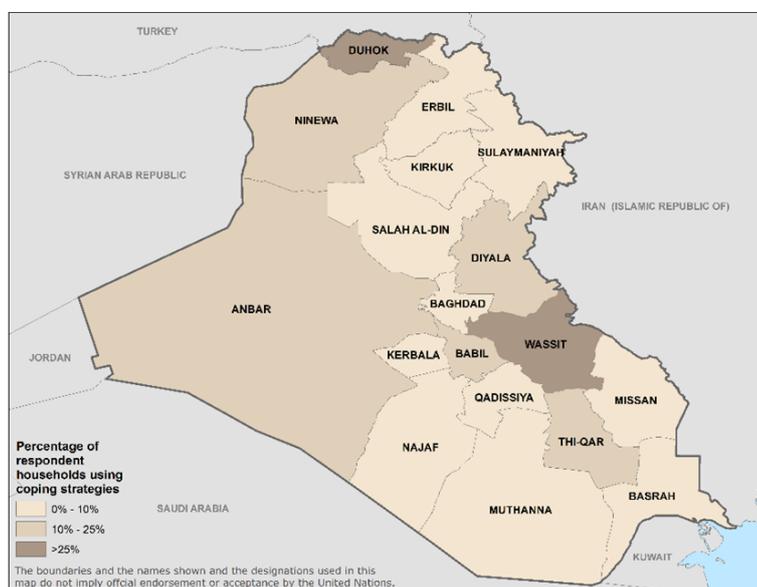
Source: WFP mVAM, April 2015

### IDPs are using more negative coping strategies

In April, 9.7 percent of all respondents reported not having enough food, or enough money to buy food, during the week before the survey. Consequently, they had resorted to at least one food-based coping strategy. This is a slight decrease from March (12.5%) (p-value=0.05). As seen in Map 3, the proportion of households using negative coping was highest in Duhok (36.1%) and Wassit (31.8%), where respondents used all types of coping strategies at a similar rate.

More IDP households (26.7%) resort to negative coping strategies than non-displaced households (5.4%) (p-value=0.00). Eating cheaper/less preferred foods and limiting portion size remain the most frequently used strategies among IDPs, while non-IDPs reported using most types of coping strategies to a similar extent

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



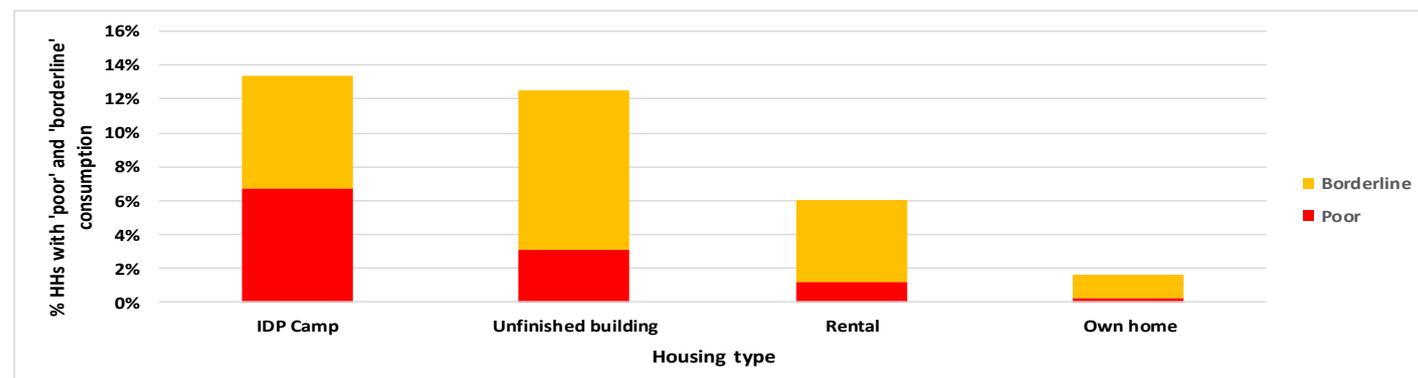
Source: WFP mVAM, April 2015

### Food insecurity is more common among worse-off and displaced households

Housing can be considered a proxy measure of a household’s socio-economic status. The survey found that housing type was associated with a household’s probability of belonging to a certain food consumption group and with its propensity to resorting to coping.

As shown in Figure 2, respondents who live in IDP camps or unfinished buildings are more likely to have poor or borderline FCS than those who own or rent their home.

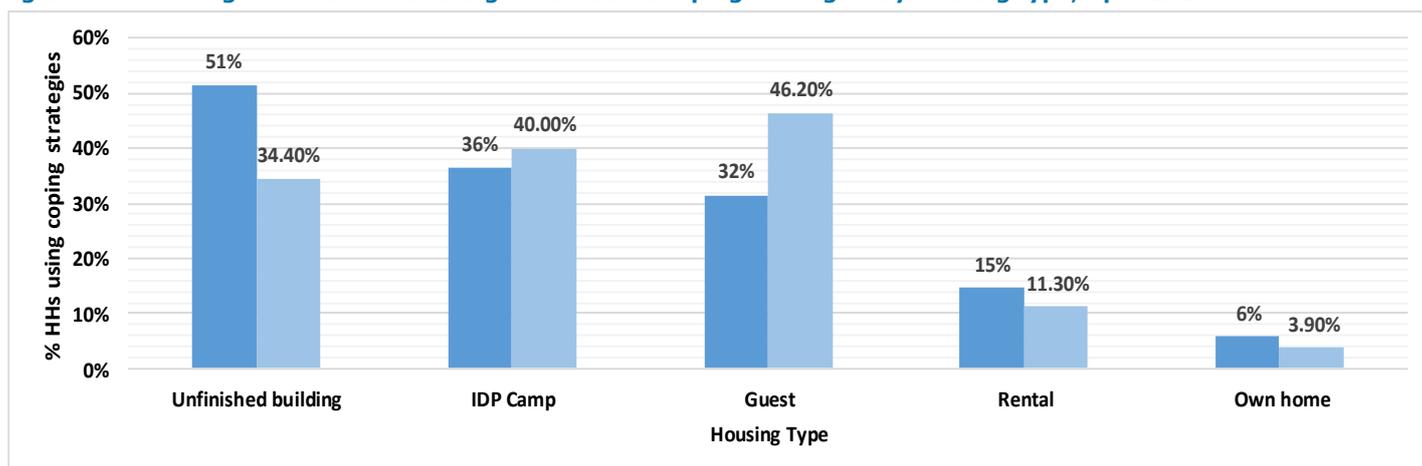
**Figure 2: Percentage of households with ‘poor’ or ‘borderline’ food consumption by housing type, April 2015**



Source: WFP mVAM, April 2015

Similarly, households living in IDP camps, unfinished buildings, or those who live with someone for free or with a host family ('Guests') are more likely to engage in negative coping than those who own or rent their home.

**Figure 3: Percentage of households using food-related coping strategies by housing type, April 2015**



Source: WFP mVAM, April 2015

### Markets, food supply and purchasing power

Compared to [WFP Market monitoring in March](#), food prices increased in April in all central and northern governorates by between 3 and 13 percent. Fluctuations in food prices were recorded for wheat flour, sugar and lentils. Rice and vegetable oil showed relatively less variation.

As shown in Figure 4, the price of a basic food basket in Anbar increased by an average 13 percent compared to March, because of the upsurge in conflict and consequent disruption to supply routes. The highest price rises were seen for wheat flour (28%) and lentils (24%), followed by sugar (13%). Furthermore, 86 percent of Anbar respondents reported not receiving any PDS rations in April.<sup>5</sup> Of the respondents who received a partial ration, only 25 percent received wheat.

Food prices also increased by an average 13 percent in Salah Al-Din. The highest rises were for wheat flour (18%) and sugar (22%). Roads and supply lines connecting Salah Al-Din with neighbouring governorates were inaccessible in April, particularly in Samara, Tikrit and Baiji. This limited access to food. Moreover, 69 percent of respondents did not receive PDS rations in April.

In April, a standard food basket in Anbar cost 70 percent more than in Baghdad. The most expensive food baskets in Anbar were in the districts of Haditha (IQD 3546) and Baghdadi (IQD 2831). In Haditha, the food basket is four times as expensive as in Baghdad.

In Ninewa, Mosul has the highest food basket price (IQD 2292), more than twice as expensive as in Baghdad (IQD 952). Average prices in Kirkuk and Salah Al-Din are 16 percent higher than in Baghdad. High food prices are probably the result of the recent intensified conflict, which has affected supply lines and road access in Haditha, Ramadi, Mosul and parts of Kirkuk. Prices remain relatively low in areas less affected by conflict.

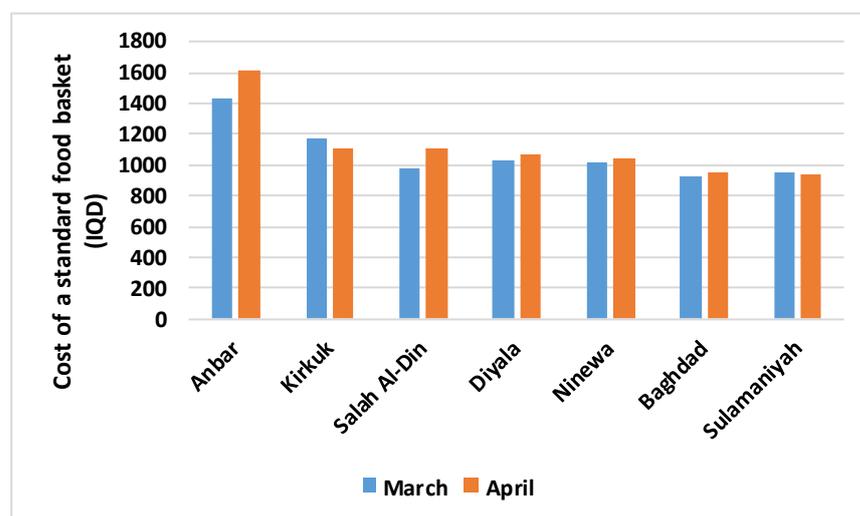
The rise in food prices coupled with lower wage rates for unskilled labour have reduced household purchasing power. Terms of trade are lowest in Anbar, where people can purchase 7 food baskets with their daily wage, compared to 32 baskets in Sulaymaniyah, 22 in Kirkuk, 18 in Diyala, 17 in Ninewa and 14 in Salah Al-Din (see Figure 5).

**Food basket, 2100 kcal**

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



**Figure 4: Cost of a standard food basket, March and April 2015**

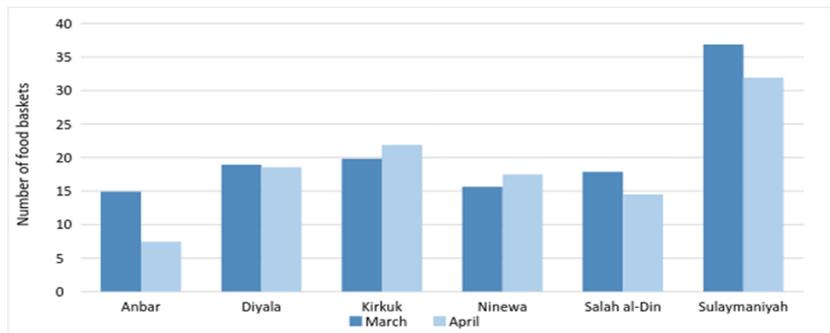


Source: WFP mVAM, April 2015

<sup>5</sup>Results on household's PDS access presented in this bulletin are based on responses to the mVAM live telephone interviews conducted from April 5 - 24, and therefore may not fully capture PDS distribution received by respondents post interview during the month of April.

Purchasing power dropped by almost 50 percent in Anbar in April (Figure 5). Daily wages fell from IQD 15,000–25,000 in March to IQD 10,000–25,000 in April. This is much lower than the daily wage rates for unskilled labour in Baghdad that varies between IQD 25–30,000 and stands at an average rate of IQD 30,000 in Sulaymaniyah.

Figure 5: Wage-to-food terms of trade, March and April 2015

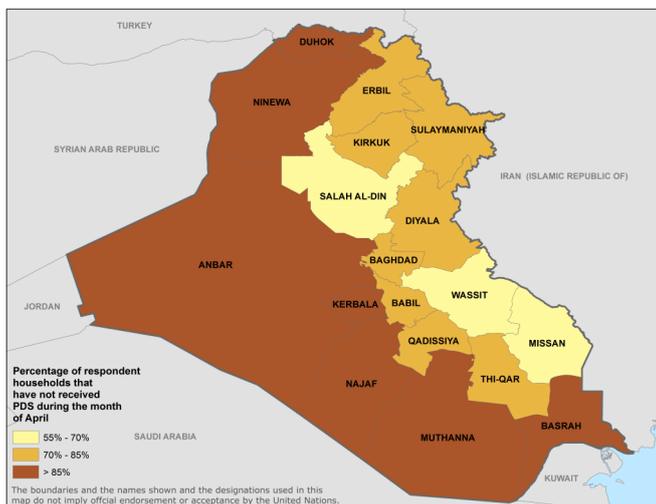


Source: WFP mVAM, April 2015

Over 80 percent of respondents did not receive any PDS rations in April. This proportion was even higher in governorates with the highest concentration of IDP respondents such as Duhok (88.9%), Ninewa (88.2%) and Muthanna (86.7%). The PDS was reported to function better in two governorates: full rations were received by 21 percent of households in Missan and by 18 percent in Wassit (Map 3).

For people receiving partial rations, 62 percent received rice and 52 percent received sugar. Vegetable oil was received by 48 percent, while only 30 percent obtained wheat flour.

Map 4: PDS access by governorate, April 2015



Source: WFP mVAM, April 2015

### Box 2: National PDS data from the Iraq Ministry of Trade

National level PDS data supplied by the Ministry of Trade indicates that for the period of January through mid-April, across Iraq only 42% of the PDS wheat flour distribution requirement was met. In the key conflict governorates of Ninewa, Salah Al-Din and Anbar the percentages were 10%, 3% and 10% respectively. Southern governorates fared considerably better, with Wasit, Babil and Qadisiya receiving 82%, 73% and 72% of their respective PDS wheat flour requirement. However, it is notable that two southern governorates, Baghdad and Missan received only 31% and 34% of their respective PDS wheat flour requirement. National level PDS rice distribution appears to more equitable across Iraq as a whole, however distribution followed a similar pattern to wheat flour distribution, in the conflict-affected governorates of Ninewa, Salah ad Din, and Anbar receiving 0%, 31%, and 15% respectively. Nationally across Iraq 44% of the PDS requirement for PDS rice distribution was met during the January – mid April period.

The Iraqi wheat harvest has begun, with the Ministry of Trade reporting procurement to date of around 900,000 MT of soft wheat. This wheat is from the southern governorates, and is generally low in protein and gluten, requiring blending with higher quality imported hard wheats. It is apparent from satellite imagery and field reports that a sizable wheat crop is fast approaching its harvest period. The fate of this wheat is largely unknown, however a number of local sources are reporting that ISIS is preparing to accept and pay farmers for their wheat at a price above the current market price, but below the price being paid by the Ministry of Trade.

Sources: Iraq Ministry of Trade and the Grain Board of Iraq

## Conclusion

mVAM results indicate that the latest wave of conflict and displacement in April has pushed up the price of staple foods still further. This is especially true for wheat, which has been severely reduced in PDS distributions. Rising food prices, coupled with lower wage rates for unskilled labour, continue to undermine household purchasing power, reducing food security and disrupting livelihoods. This trend is particularly evident in Anbar, which saw an upsurge in violence and displacement that has increased people's vulnerability to food insecurity. IDP households continue to be the most affected segment of all surveyed households, with reduced food consumption and an increased reliance on negative coping strategies.

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Financial support to mVAM provided by USAID

