



World Food Programme

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Bulletin 17 – April 2016

# IRAQ

April 2016: Concerns over rising food prices in Fallujah and increasing food insecurity in Ninewa

## Highlights

- **Internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees and households in conflict-affected areas are the most vulnerable and food insecure.**
- **Although many households are using negative coping strategies, most are consuming an acceptable diet except households in Ninewa and IDPs in Akre (Ninewa) and Samarra (Salah Al-Din).**
- **In Al-Wahda and Al-Moalmin neighborhoods (Fallujah), households have reported severe food shortages for the third month in a row.**
- **The cost of the standard food basket has fallen in all monitored governorates, except in Diyala and Salah Al-Din. However, in Anbar and Ninewa food markets are highly volatile with soaring food prices and households have irregular income.**

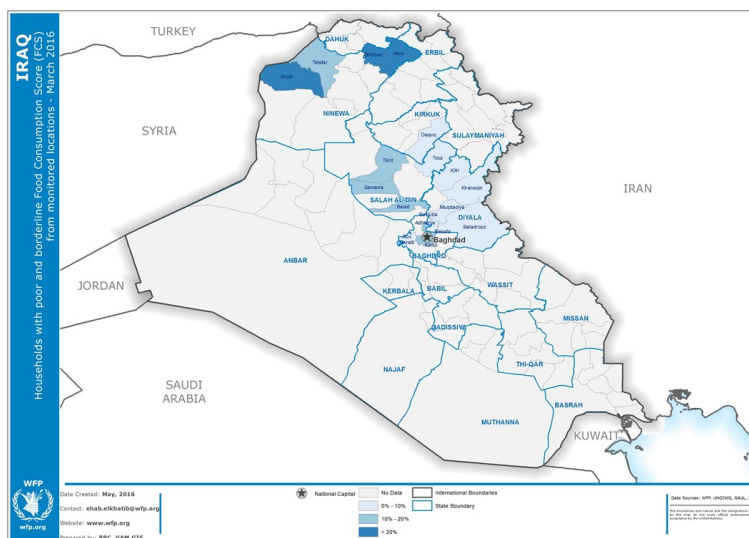
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## Poor food consumption among households in Ninewa, IDPs and returnees

mVAM March data indicates that between 65 and 99 percent of sampled households have an acceptable diet in terms of diversity and food frequency. However, as in previous rounds of food security monitoring, households in Ninewa reported poor food consumption, particularly in Sinjar, Akre and Shikhan. The situation was better in Ba'quba, Kifri and Khanaqin in Diyala governorate, where more than 95 percent of interviewed households were found to have acceptable food consumption (see Map 1).

IDPs, returnees and residents exhibited different levels of food security in March. The Food Consumption Score (FCS) of IDPs was worse than that of non-IDPs. The highest proportion of inadequate consumption among IDPs and returnees was registered in Akre (Ninewa) and Samarra (Salah Al-Din) where 41 percent and 30 percent of IDPs and returnees had a 'poor' 'borderline' FCS respectively (see Figure 1).

**Map 1. Iraq - Percentage of respondent households with 'poor' and 'borderline' Food Consumption Score (FCS) - March 2016**



Source: WFP mVAM, March 2016

In February 2016, WFP began a six-month pilot distributions of unrestricted cash in Akre. In March, more than 7,000 Iraqi IDPs were assisted with cash. IDPs are receiving cash assistance through money transfer agents at the distribution points. WFP, in collaboration with third party monitor (TPM) Stars Orbit Consulting, conducted a follow-up survey on IDPs beneficiaries (n=85) in Akre receiving cash. Monitoring showed generally positive food security outcome findings.



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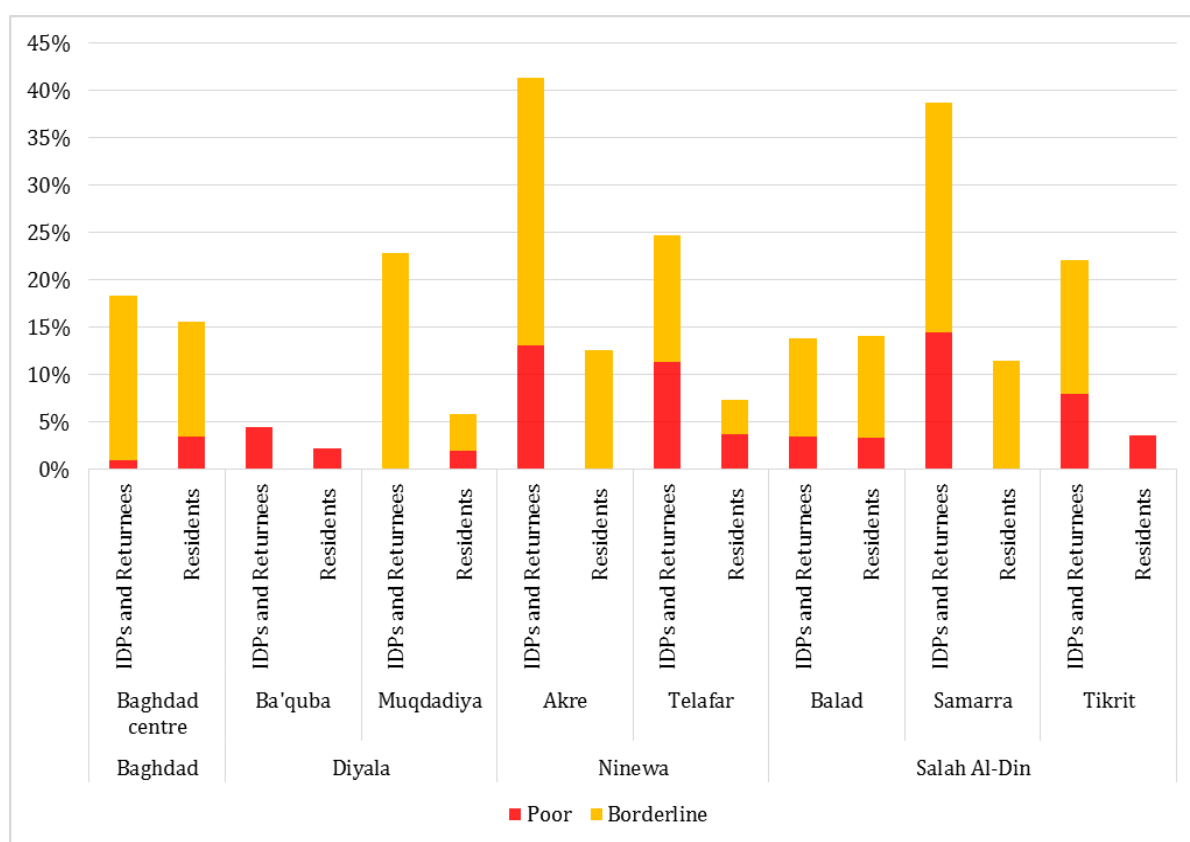
## Box 1. Situation update

In an effort to retake the territory held by armed opposition groups, the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) cut supply lines around Samarra (Salah Al-Din) in March. Meanwhile, the recaptured city of Ramadi (Anbar) has been found completely destroyed and littered with thousands of IEDs. The city is devoid of civilians, with many now displaced east of Ramadi. OCHA announced that between 11 and 13 March, 35,000 Iraqis were displaced from cities in central Anbar because of armed conflict.

On 25 March, ISF, along with Kurdish Peshmerga and US-led coalition support, officially launched their campaign to retake Mosul in Ninewa governorate. Simultaneously, operations in Anbar are currently underway to retake the city of Heet and other ISIL-held areas in western Iraq. Large-scale civilian displacement, increased civilian casualties and heightened vulnerability can be expected as these military operations progress.

Sources: WFP, OCHA and IOM

Figure 1. Households with inadequate consumption by respondent status, March 2016



Source: WFP mVAM, March 2016

## Widespread use of negative coping strategies

Households were asked if there were times in the week before the data collection when they did not have enough food or money to buy food. Many households reported having food access problems in March — as many as 32 percent of respondents in Akre (Ninewa) and 30 percent of respondents in Samarra (Salah Al-Din).

In March, 50 percent of IDP and returnee respondents in Samarra (Salah Al-Din) and over 30 percent of IDP and returnee respondents in Telaraf (Ninewa) and Tikrit (Salah Al-Din) used negative coping strategies. The use of negative coping strategies in parts of the surveyed population raises concerns about the sustainability of the acceptable food consumption levels.

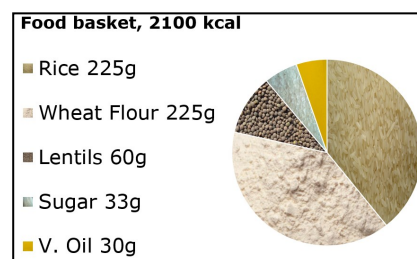
## Standard food basket falls in price

In March, the average cost of the standard food basket continued to fall in all monitored governorates between February and March, except in Diyala where prices slightly increased (+2%) and in Salah Al-Din, where prices remained stable. The food basket became cheaper in the conflict-affected governorates of Baghdad and Kirkuk (-10%), Anbar (-3%) and Ninewa (-1%) (see Table 1).

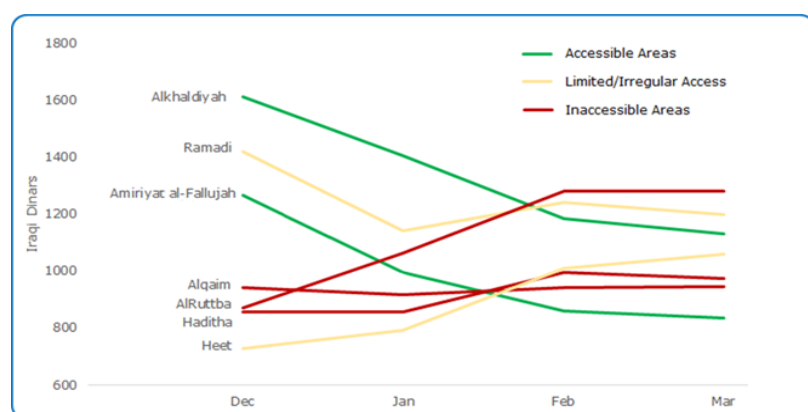
**Table 1: Cost of a standard food basket**

Governorate	March-16	Price changes 1 month	Price changes 3 month	Price changes 6 months
Baghdad	IQD 851	-7%	-10%	-10%
Anbar	IQD 1,007	-3%	-13%	-4%
Diyala	IQD 844	2%	-4%	-11%
Kirkuk	IQD 900	-7%	-15%	-11%
Ninewa	IQD 821	-1%	-13%	-14%
Salah Al-Din	IQD 878	0%	-15%	-5%

Source: WFP mVAM, March 2016



**Figure 2. Average cost of a food basket in Anbar, December 2015 – March 2016**



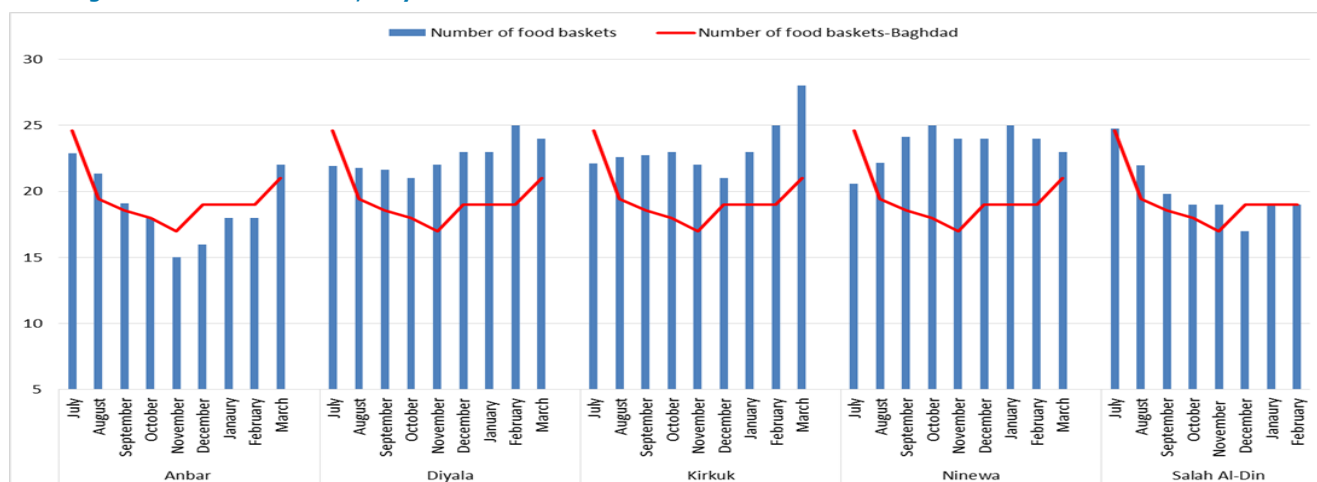
Source: WFP mVAM, March 2016

Among districts in Anbar, food prices differ between accessible and inaccessible areas (Figure 2). Compared to December 2015, the food basket is more expensive in the inaccessible districts of Al-Ruttba (+32%), Haditha (+12%) and Heet (+31%). The conflict has returned to Heet, so the average cost of the food basket continues to rise there. In Fallujah, for the third consecutive month respondents from Al-Wahda neighborhood reported that shops and markets had exhausted all food supplies including wheat, sugar, rice, vegetable oil and lentils. People are mainly dependent on vegetables that they are collecting from farms in rural areas close to the city. Key informants in Al-Moalmin neighborhood also say that food is becoming less available. The only food available comes from the stocks that some families still have in their homes, which is being sold at extremely high prices to other families. Since the beginning of the siege, prices have increased and are approaching the maximum purchasable level for consumers, indicating a further depletion of availability. Al Ruttba continued to report the most expensive food prices in Anbar governorate (1,280 IQD), with prices 23 percent higher than the governorate average.

## Purchasing power on the rise

The overall purchasing power of the sampled households increased by three food baskets in Kirkuk, by two food baskets in Baghdad and Anbar, and by one food basket in Diyala (Figure 3). The increase in purchasing power in Baghdad and Kirkuk corresponds with a fall in food prices (-7%). In Anbar, the better purchasing power is linked to a 14.5 percent increase in the wages for daily manual labour. By contrast, purchasing power in Ninewa continued to fall in March, down two food baskets compared to February. Although prices were lower in the governorate, income from daily manual labour fell for the third consecutive month. The majority of respondents said that purchasing food was their main source of acquiring food, followed by food assistance so reduced purchasing power will have a marked effect on food security.

**Figure 3: Wage-to-food terms of trade, July 2015 – March 2016**

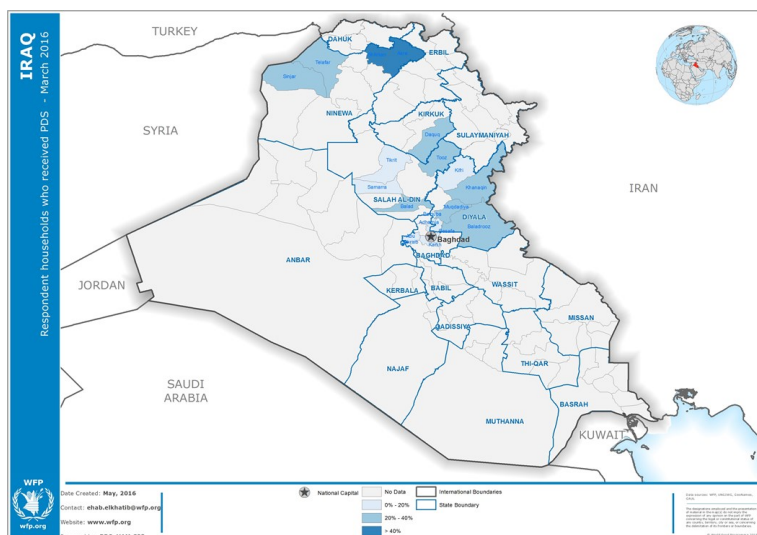


## Household access to the Public Distribution System (PDS)

The level of household access to Public Distribution System (PDS) rations varied from one location to another in March. Only 6 percent of respondents in Kifri (Diyala) reported receiving PDS rations; however, 49 percent of respondents received their monthly rations in Akre and 44 percent in Shikhan (Ninewa) (see Map 3).

There was no significant difference in the level of access to PDS rations between IDPs and non-IDP households.

Map 3. Respondent households who received PDS in March 2016



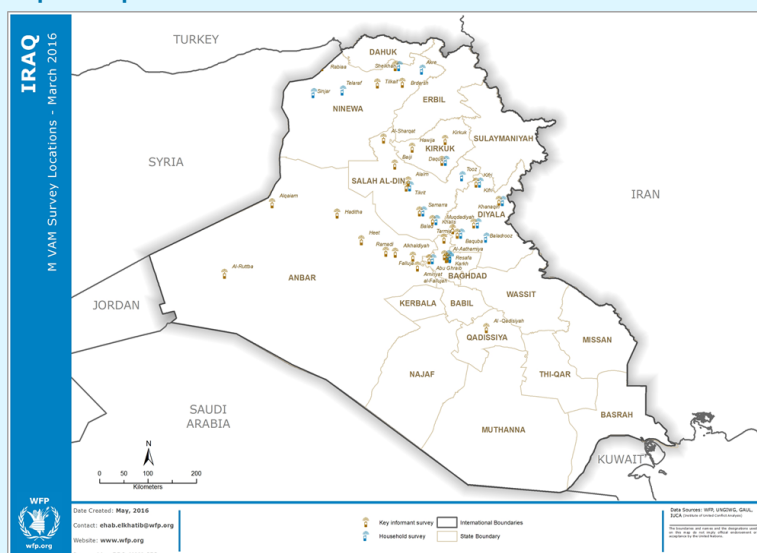
Source: WFP mVAM, March 2016

### Methodology - mVAM remote data collection

In March 2016, mVAM conducted the eleventh round of household food security monitoring using live telephone interviews throughout Iraq. Data was collected from a sample of 1,551 respondents via Korek, a major mobile network operator. WFP monitored respondents living in Iraq's 18 conflict hotspots in 5 governorates, drawn from Korek's database.

In addition to monitoring household food security, WFP collected market information in the central and northern governorates of Iraq, using live telephone interviews. In collaboration with Islamic Relief, 220 calls were successfully made in March, obtaining information using a simplified market questionnaire. Responses covered 48 different locations (sub-districts) in 6 governorates: Anbar (10), Diyala (8), Kirkuk (10), Ninewa (6), Baghdad (7) and Salah Al-Din (7).

Map 4. Iraq mVAM data collection - March 2016



Source: WFP mVAM, March 2016

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. Households with 'poor' or 'borderline' consumption are considered to be consuming an inadequate diet and to be food insecure.

For further information please contact:

Jane Pearce jane.pearce@wfp.org  
Arif Husain arif.husain@wfp.org  
Jean-Martin Bauer jean-martin.bauer@wfp.org



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