



World Food Programme

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## Bulletin 8 – July 2015

# IRAQ

July 2015: Trend of increasing food insecurity persists in Anbar and Ninewa

## Highlights

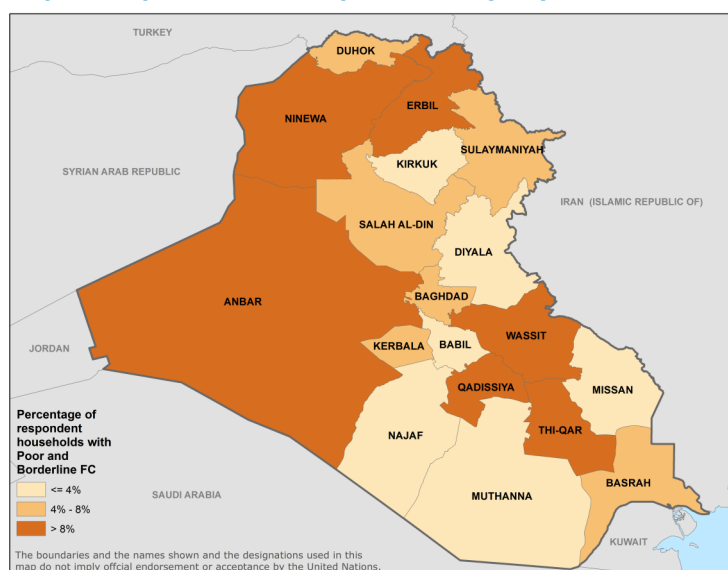
- Food insecurity escalated in Iraq in the second quarter of 2015. WFP's mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (mVAM) trend data collected from March to June points to a steady deterioration in food consumption and coping indicators, especially in Anbar and Ninewa governorates, which have been directly affected by conflict.
- Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are the most affected by food insecurity. More than one in five of them (21%) reported 'poor' or 'borderline' consumption in June. Two in five (40%) of IDP households reported not having enough food or money to buy food for the same month.
- In June, food prices increased and wage-to-food terms of trade declined in Diyala and Ninewa. In Anbar, food prices are very high, and food supply is extremely limited in the conflict-affected district of Haditha.
- Public Distribution System (PDS) access remains low, with fewer households reporting having received a full PDS ration in June than in the previous month.
- In spite of conflict, the 2015 wheat crop production levels were higher compared to 2014 in the South and in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).

## Current events update

Intense armed conflict continued throughout May, with particularly severe violence in Anbar. In June, conflict, internal unrest and displacement continued to compound the humanitarian crisis in Iraq. Some 8.2 million people were declared in urgent need of humanitarian assistance compared with 5.2 million in February. Of these more than 3 million were IDPs and 3.7 million were children ([OCHA 2015 Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan](#)). Around 2.2 million people in need of emergency assistance were beyond the reach of aid agencies, and access to the estimated 5.1 million people in areas under armed opposition groups' control was limited (International Organization for Migration (IOM), June 2015).

Humanitarian needs continued to rise due to the large numbers of IDPs and returnees in June. Many of the newly displaced fled their homes as a result of fighting between the Iraqi Security Forces and armed groups in Anbar and Salah al-Din governorates. Since the beginning of hostilities in Ramadi in early April, nearly 300,000 individuals have been displaced from the city and its outskirts. The majority of those IDPs were hosted by three governorates - Baghdad (28,110 individuals), Anbar (16,236 individuals) and Erbil (13,170 individuals) ([IOM Iraq Displacement Tracking Matrix \(DTM\)](#), June 2015). New IDPs from Anbar face serious restrictions accessing neighbouring provinces (Babylon and Kerbala are closed to them).

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



Source: WFP mVAM, June 2015

In Anbar, IDPs lack basic services including adequate access to hygiene and water facilities, electricity, food assistance and shelter, particularly in Haditha district, and Amiriyat al-Fallujah and Al-Habbaniya sub-districts of Falluja district ([OCHA](#)).

In Salah al-Din, according to the IOM's DTM preliminary emergency tracking data, between 14 and 25 June over 16,000 individuals were displaced from the districts of Al Dujail, Balad, Samarra and Al Hawija. Meanwhile, between 14 and 23 June more than 1,500 families (approximately 9,000 individuals) returned to the recently liberated Tikrit City and the surrounding areas, bringing the estimated total number of returnees in Tikrit District to 16,384 families ([OCHA Iraq Crisis Situation Report No. 49: 17-23 June 2015](#)).

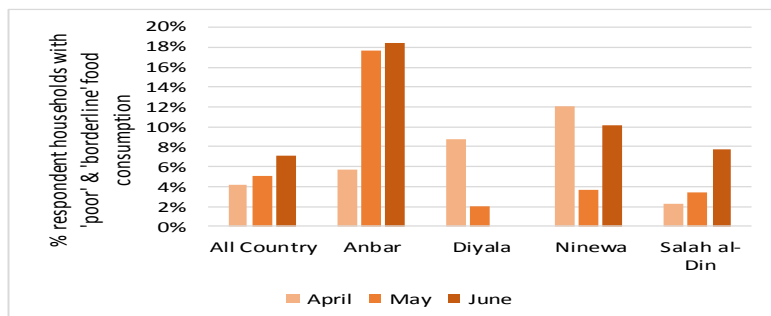
## Food consumption patterns in Iraq

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. Those with 'poor' and 'borderline' consumption are considered to be food insecure.

As Figure 1 shows, nationally the proportion of surveyed households ('All Country') with 'poor' and 'borderline' consumption increased between April and June\*\* (see [methodological note](#) on 'reporting statistical significance level'). The mVAM data for that period points to a deterioration in food consumption in the governorates directly affected by conflict (Anbar and Ninewa).

Map 1 shows that in June the highest prevalence of 'poor' and 'borderline' food consumption households was in Qadissiya (20%), Anbar (18.4%) and Wassit (17.5%).

**Figure 1: Percentage of respondent households with 'poor' and 'borderline' food consumption**



Source: WFP mVAM, June 2015

In June, an overall reduction was noted in surveyed household's consumption frequency of protein-rich foods, including eggs - particularly in Ninewa (-28.8%\*\*\*) and Salah-al-Din (-26.6%\*\*), and dairy (-9%\*\*\*). Surveyed households also reported a slight decrease in frequency of cereals consumption (-9.2%\*\*\*) and fruit (-8.9%\*\*\*). Consumption of tubers and meat remained similar to May.

Displaced households continued to be considerably worse off in terms of consumption than non-displaced households. Indeed, 21 percent of IDP households surveyed in June had 'poor' or 'borderline' food consumption, compared with 4 percent of non-displaced respondents. The poor food insecurity indicators noted in Wassit and Qadissiya are explained by the relatively large proportion of households surveyed in June that are displaced. In addition, IDP households reported a higher reduction in the consumption frequency of most food groups compared to non-displaced respondents, including protein-rich foods (eggs, meat and dairy), cereals, tubers and vegetables.

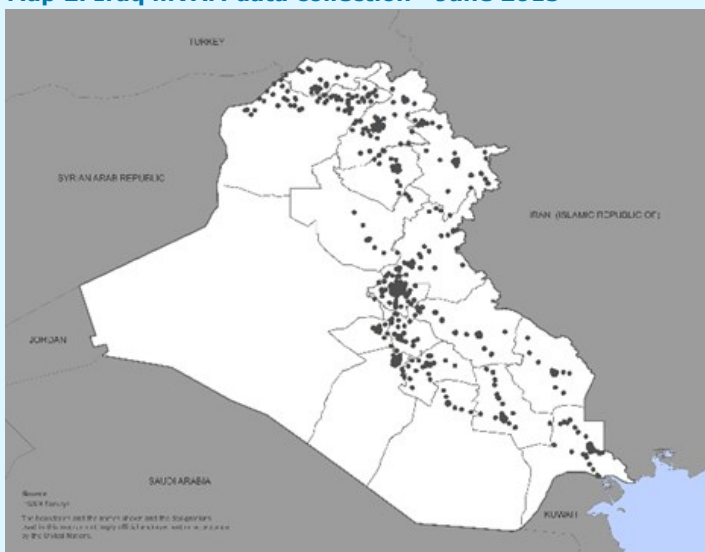
## Methodology - mVAM remote data collection

June 2015, mVAM conducted the fourth round of household food security monitoring using live telephone interviews throughout Iraq. Data was collected from a sample of 1,103 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.

In addition to household food security indicators, 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 June from 51 locations in the governorates of Anbar (8), Ninewa (8), Diyala (9), Kirkuk (13) and Salah Al-Din (13) using a simplified market questionnaire.

Further details on survey methodology are available [online](#).

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



Source: WFP mVAM, June 2015

## Food related coping is on the rise, especially amongst IDPs

Overall, 13.2 percent of all surveyed respondents reported not having enough food, or enough money to buy food in June and therefore having to resort to the use of at least one coping strategy. This is a slight increase from what was reported in May (10.6 %\*) and also in April (9.7%). In line with the trend of worsening consumption noted in conflict-affected Anbar and Ninewa governorates, the share of households using negative food-related coping strategies has also steadily increased over the last few months. By contrast, coping trends have been more stable in Diyala and Salah al-Din (Figure 2).

In June, a higher percentage of IDP respondents (40%) reported using at least one negative coping strategy compared with the previous month (36% \*\*). Again IDPs were significantly more likely to report using consumption-based coping than non-displaced households, of which only 9 percent reported using coping strategies. As shown in Figure 3, this trend has been consistently evident in the three previous mVAM survey rounds.

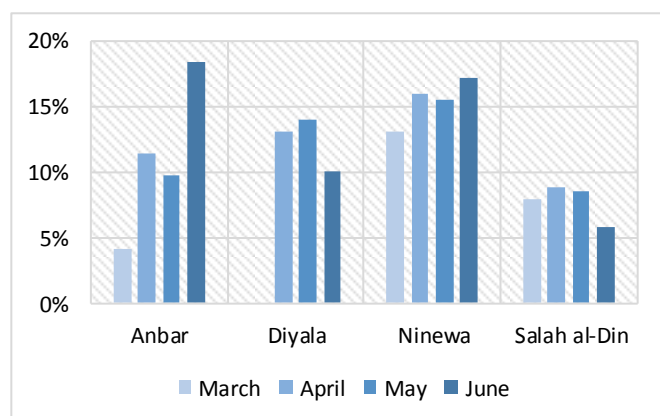
**Map 3: Iraq – reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) - June 2015**



Source: WFP mVAM, June 2015

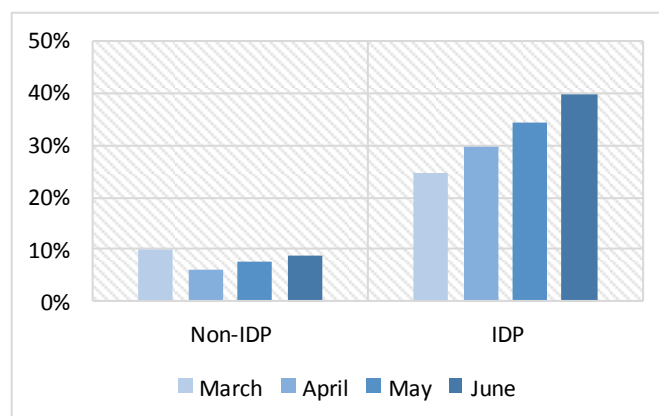
Map 3 shows that a high share of respondents in Wasset and Missan reported using negative coping in June, 38 and 33 percent of respondents respectively. Moreover, households from governorates most affected by conflict and displacement during the reporting period had a relatively high prevalence of negative food-related coping, such as Duhok (22%), Anbar (18%), Ninewa (17%) and Baghdad (12%).

**Figure 2: Percentage of respondents from conflict-affected governorates coping, March – June 2015**



Source: WFP mVAM, June 2015

**Figure 3: Percentage of non-IDP and IDP respondents coping, March – June 2015**



Source: WFP mVAM, June 2015

## Markets, food supply and purchasing power

Compared with [WFP market monitoring in May](#), food price trends were mixed in June. The cost of a standard food basket decreased marginally in Anbar (see Box 1), Kirkuk and Salah al-Din by 5, 3 and 12 percent respectively. In

### Box 1. Food prices extremely high in the Haditha district of Anbar

In June, food prices in conflict-affected Haditha district were again reported as significantly higher than the overall average for Anbar: the average price of a standard basket of food items (IQD 4926) was four times higher than in other monitored locations within the governorate, revealing a highly stressed food supply situation.

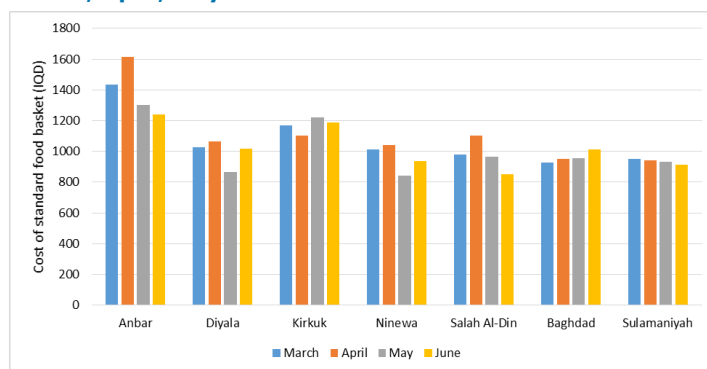
Such high prices strongly suggest that food supplies in Haditha are extremely limited. Shortages of food items – especially rice, wheat flour and bread are being reported. Meanwhile, food assistance is very limited due to increasingly restricted and limited physical access – items are reportedly collected from various organisations and escorted by military convoy to the Baghdadi area, and then back into Haditha.

According to mVAM's June data, households surveyed in Haditha – particularly those living in unfinished buildings and rented houses – reported high use of consumption-related coping strategies, well above the average reported in the rest of Anbar. Borrowing food or money from relatives and friends was the most commonly used coping strategy, followed by eating less preferred and expensive foods. Residents also reported relying on subsistence farming as much as possible. In addition, there is reportedly an extreme shortage of cooking fuel, so residents are using electricity to cook. Bread is baked at home as bakeries lack fuel.

Diyala, Ninewa and Baghdad the cost of a food basket increased by 17, 11 and 6 percent respectively (Figure 4).

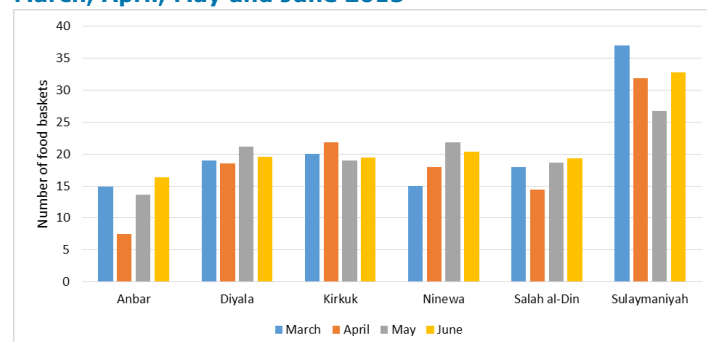
The price of a standard food basket in Anbar was IQD 1,200 in June – 20 percent above the average in Baghdad. High prices were also noted in Kirkuk. In both governorates, wheat flour and sugar prices continued to be 50-90 percent higher than in Baghdad. Prices settled in Salah Al-Din in line with those in Baghdad. To some extent, and in some locations, higher prices in June may have reflected strong seasonal demand associated with the observance of Ramadan.

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



Source: WFP mVAM, June 2015

**Figure 5: Wage-to-food terms of trade, comparison of March, April, May and June 2015**



Source: WFP mVAM, June 2015

In line with the trends observed for changes in the cost of a basic food basket in June, household purchasing power decreased in Diyala and Ninewa, and increased in Anbar, Salah al-Din and Kirkuk (Figure 5).

Although purchasing power appears to have increased in Anbar, it remained weaker than all other monitored governorates; people in Anbar could purchase 16 food baskets with their daily wage, compared with 33 in Sulaymaniyah and on average 19-20 in the rest of the monitored governorates.

### Access to the public distribution system (PDS) remained limited

**Table 1: PDS monthly ration composition**

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

mVAM data suggests that access to PDS rations further decreased in June. Less than 1 percent of all surveyed households reported having received a full PDS ration, compared with 8.25\*\*\* percent in May. The highest proportion of households not receiving any PDS was reported from Muthanna (100%), Najaf (94%) and Diyala (92%). Overall, the proportion of households that reported receiving a partial ration remained nearly the same as in May, at nearly 15 percent of all surveyed respondents.

#### Box 2: Wheat production improved in spite of the conflict

In spite of the ongoing conflict, Iraq has seen 2015 wheat production increase from 2014 levels across most of the southern governorates and in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). WFP estimates that production is likely to exceed 4 million tons, and moreover, that "realized" domestic wheat supplies are projected to increase by around 40 percent year on year.

However, around 1 million tons of the 2014 wheat harvest were lost because production areas and storage sites were under the control of armed groups. This resulted in "net" or realized supplies of around 2.2 million tons from the 2014 harvest. This summer, government procurement of wheat from local farmers will approach 3.2 million tons. But opposition forces are likely to have control of the bulk of this season's wheat harvest from Ninewa. Government procurement from Salah ad Din and Diyala was also down sharply.

Nonetheless, in light of increased "realised" domestic production, the Grain Board of Iraq reported sharply higher PDS deliveries of wheat/flour nationally in June. However, as we have seen, conflict areas, especially Ninewa and Anbar, continue to see PDS wheat/flour deliveries far below requirements. Supplies of imported wheat, used for blending with domestic wheat appear to be nearly exhausted. Imported wheat is reportedly still being blended at around a 30 percent rate for PDS flour milled in southern areas of Iraq, while PDS wheat flour across northern areas is 100 percent domestic. Reportedly higher deliveries of PDS wheat/flour are in line with domestic wheat procurement of around 3 million tons.

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

Iraq's wheat and rice stock were at very low levels in late May. Wheat from the current harvest had not yet entered the supply chain in quantity, and imported rice stocks remained short due to cancelled tenders. PDS distribution of wheat flour for June lagged, as only 32 percent of PDS wheat flour requirements were received by 1st June. This figure jumped to 74 percent by the third week of June. Conflict governorates (Anbar, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din) had not received any of their requirements by the start of June. Even southern governorates reported PDS shortfalls, with PDS wheat flour distribution estimated between 27 and 51 percent of requirements at the start of the month.

#### Methodological Note: Reporting statistical tests and significance level

Except where explicitly indicated, only statistically significant results are reported. To report the level of statistical significance, the following reference is used:

p-value	reported symbol
0.10 to 0.05	*
< 0.05 to 0.01	**
< 0.01	***

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