Arab food security monitoring framework

Country reviews

Iraq

UNITED NATIONS
الاسكوا
ESCWA

Shared Prosperity **Dignified Life**

UNITED NATIONS
الاسكوا
ESCWA

Shared Prosperity **Dignified Life**

VISION

ESCWA, an innovative catalyst for a stable, just and flourishing Arab region

MISSION

Committed to the 2030 Agenda, ESCWA's passionate team produces innovative knowledge, fosters regional consensus and delivers transformational policy advice. Together, we work for a sustainable future for all.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Arab food security monitoring framework

Country reviews

Iraq

UNITED NATIONS
Beirut

United Nations publication issued by ESCWA, United Nations House, Riad El Solh Square, P.O. Box: 11-8575, Beirut, Lebanon.

Website: www.unescwa.org

Photo Credit:
Cover: ©iStock

Contents

Key Messages

The monitoring framework highlights that Iraq is experiencing the triple burden of malnutrition with high undernourishment, obesity, child stunting and anaemia among women. With the continued sociopolitical instability, the country's food security remains at risk. The country profile reviews the impact of COVID-19, early measures against it and their effect on the food situation.

OBESITY

CHILD STUNTING

ANAEMIA

Introduction

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and its partners developed the Arab Food Security Monitoring Framework that helps countries assess their food security situation despite its complex and multidimensional nature.[1] The Monitoring Framework is an outcome of the project entitled "Promoting Food and Water Security through Cooperation and Capacity Development in the Arab Region", implemented in collaboration and partnership with Arab countries, the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), academia and other experts, and with the support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

The framework builds on the globally agreed upon definition of food security as existing "when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life",[2] which, as defined, comprises four dimensions, namely availability, access, utilization, and stability, can be evaluated at individual, household, national, regional, or global levels and can be seasonal, transitory or chronic. The framework was developed over a period of three years and involved consultations with more than 200 Arab and international experts. It involved a wide-ranging literature review to account for the latest thinking and experiences in assessing and monitoring food security at national, regional and global levels as well as a mapping of past and present policies, strategies and action plans.

The encompassing review led to the development of a comprehensive monitoring framework that tracks food security at different spatial levels, considers its four dimensions and accounts for both individual and household food security while facilitating a follow-up of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The end result was the Monitoring Framework that expresses food security and nutrition as a function of a multitude of indicators spread in its four dimensions, though approximately five to six indicators under each dimension account for most of the variations and thus are more consequential than the rest. Most of the selected indicators are already widely used globally to monitor aspects of the food system, and the SDGs and other plans of actions are used by major global institutions as development, economic, social, health, or environmental indicators. It was also ensured that the indicators are measurable, relevant to the Arab context and available for at least 50 per cent of Arab countries or the regional population, or both.

1 Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), 2019. Tracking Food Security in the Arab Region (E/ESCWA/SDPD/2019/4). Beirut. Available at https://www.unescwa.org/publications/tracking-food-security-arab-region.

2 Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), 2009. Report of the Committee on World Food Security: Final version. Agenda item III, Thirty-fifth Session of the Committee on World Food Security, 14, 15 and 17 October 2009, CFS:2009/2 Rev.2. Rome.

The 24 indicators that were selected are split into a core pillar with three ex post or outcome indicators — prevalence of undernourishment, moderate or severe food insecurity and obesity, while the remaining 21 ex ante or causal indicators were further split into the four food security dimensions as shown below. All the indicators are global in nature while catering to regional specificities and are grouped as follows:

- **The Core Pillar** comprises three outcome indicators that provide a picture of the prevailing food security and nutrition situation resulting from policies and programmes being implemented as reflected in the form of malnutrition – undernutrition (low caloric intake), overnutrition (excess caloric intake) or nutrient deficiency (low nutrient intake);

1 Core Indicators (CO)

Code	Indicator description	Short name	SDG linkage
CO1	Prevalence of undernourishment Ⓡ %	Undernourishment	2.1.1
CO2	Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity measured using FIES Ⓡ %	Food insecurity	2.1.2
CO3	Prevalence of obesity in the adult population (18 years and older) Ⓡ %	Obesity	

Ⓡ : Reversed During Normalization

- **The Availability** dimension comprises six indicators reflecting the supply side of food, namely, physical food inflow and outflow at macro and micro levels through production, trade, distribution, and others;

2 Food Availability Indicators (AV)

Code	Indicator description	Short name	SDG linkage
AV1	Primary wheat yield as a percentage of potential achievable yield - %	Yields	2.3.1
AV2	Agriculture Orientation index for government expenditures - Index	Agriculture expenditure	2.a.1
AV3	Food losses (% total food available) Ⓡ %	Food loss	12.3
AV4	Average dietary energy supply adequacy - %	Dietary energy supply	
AV5	Wheat import dependency ratio Ⓡ %	Import dependency	
AV6	Share of water resources used in agriculture out of total renewable water resources Ⓡ %	Agriculture water	6.4.2

- **The Access** dimension comprises five indicators reflecting the ability of the population to acquire needed food through financial means and/or socioeconomic strengths with determinants including income/revenues, prices and supply-chain infrastructure;

3 Food Access Indicators (AC)

Code	Indicator description	Short name	SDG linkage
AC1	Poverty headcount ratio (R) %	Poverty	1.1.1/1.2.1/1.2.2
AC2	Share of food consumption expenditure in total household consumption expenditure (R) %	Food consumption	
AC3	Unemployment rate (R) %	Unemployment	8.5.2
AC4	Logistics performance - index	Logistics	
AC5	Inflation, consumer prices (R) %	Inflation	

- **The Utilization** dimension comprises five indicators touching on nutrition impact or factors affecting it such as availability of basic water and sanitation infrastructure and critical health parameters showing the impact of food unavailability or nutrient deficiency, namely, stunting, wasting and anaemia;

4 Food Utilization Indicators (UT)

Code	Indicator description	Short name	SDG linkage
UT1	The population using at least basic drinking water services - %	Drinking water access	1.4.1/6.1.1
UT2	The population using at least basic sanitation services - %	Sanitation access	1.4.1/6.2.1
UT3	Children under 5 years of age affected by stunting (R) %	Child stunting	2.2.1
UT4	Children under 5 years of age affected by wasting (R) %	Child wasting	2.2.2
UT5	Anaemia among women of reproductive age (15-49 years) (R) %	Women anaemia	

- **The Stability** dimension comprises five indicators highlighting the variability in food production or supply factors that might affect these such as climate change, weather events, price shocks and sociopolitical conditions, all of which might impact the other food security dimensions and the core pillar as well;

5 Stability Indicators (ST)

Code	Indicator description	Short name	SDG linkage
ST1	Climate change vulnerability index (R)	Climate change	
ST2	Food price anomalies standard deviation (R)	Price anomalies	2.c.1
ST3	Political stability and absence of violence - ranking	Political stability	
ST4	Per capita food production variability - $1,000/capita (R)	Production variability	
ST5	Per capita food supply variability - kcal/capita/day (R)	Supply variability	

Data are collected and computed using a dedicated Excel template. The results are presented in the form of a dashboard with two overlapping doughnut charts whose ten rings represent the data normalized to score between 0 (worst performance) and 10 (best performance), as depicted in the graph below. The inner doughnut displays the results of the core indicators while the outer doughnut shows those of the four food security dimension indicators. During the normalization process, indicators with a low value indicating good performance were reversed and are represented with an (R). The doughnut chart is always accompanied by a table presenting the raw indicator data together with the year of data collection and the overall trend between two time periods.

By design, the framework is mechanistic for two reasons: (i) indicators are set and distributed across the food security core pillar and four dimensions; and (ii) the interpretation of results follows a determined path consisting, first, in evaluating results of the three core indicators to identify food security and/or nutritional outcome, and second, in examining the 21 dimension indicators to identify hotspot areas that need immediate action. Stakeholders only need to enter data into the provided Excel template to generate the doughnut graph and related table containing raw data and trends. The data can be sourced at the regional, national and, if available, sub-national levels and disaggregated along gender lines or others noting, however, that a great majority of indicators cannot be disaggregated below the national level.

A complete description of the framework, which was endorsed by the Executive Council of AOAD in March 2019, was published and is available at ESCWA official publication website[3] under the title "Tracking Food Security in the Arab Region".[4] In addition to providing a full background on the framework, the publication presents the key results of tracking food security at the Arab regional level and the trend over the considered years and reviews selected policies and actions that might be considered under each of the indicators to remedy arising concerns. The publication is accompanied by a technical document entitled "Manual for Monitoring Food Security in the Arab Region", which provides a more detailed description for each of the 24 indicators comprising the monitoring framework including, when applicable, computation methodology, justification for selection, linkage to SDGs, potential data sources, and normalization process. It also overviews the use of the accompanying Excel template. Since the completion of the Food Security Monitoring Framework, numerous national agricultural and statistics experts from Arab countries have received in-depth training that took place in Tunis[5] and Beirut[6] and which focused on how to utilize the framework and interpret results for maximum impact for policy and programme design and development.

This report provides a series of food security overviews for the 22 Arab countries, which build on the above-described Arab Food Security Monitoring Framework. Its aim is to further highlight how to use the framework as well as to build capacity on its use with a focus on the national level. As such, it supports Arab countries in their endeavours to utilize the framework in the implementation of food security programmes, to assess the prevailing situation and

3 See https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/tracking-food-security-arab-region-english_1.pdf.

4 See https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/manual-monitoring-food-security-arab-region-english_1.pdf.

5 See https://www.unescwa.org/events/training1-food-security-monitoring-framework-arab.

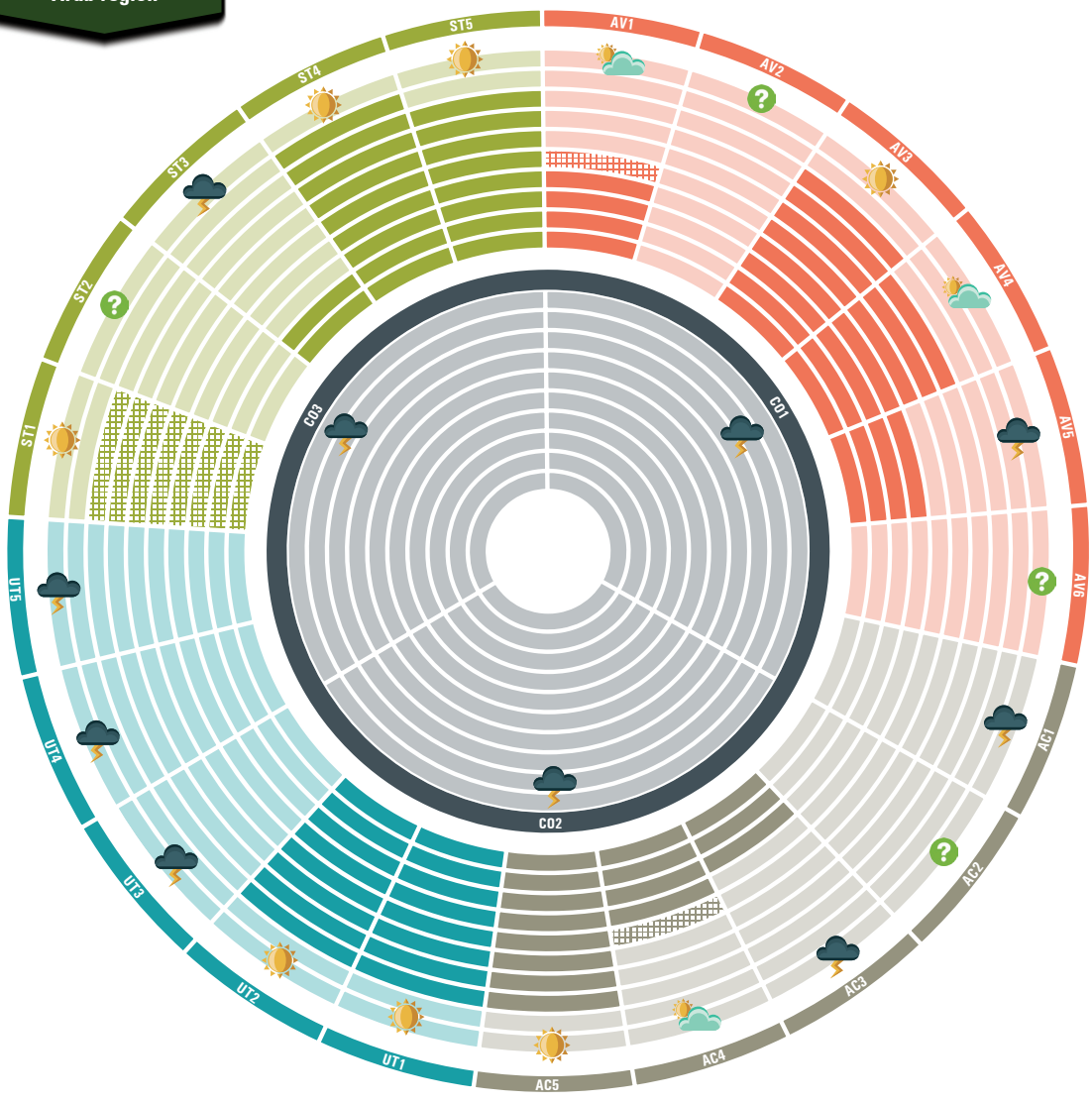
6 See https://www.unescwa.org/events/training2-food-security-monitoring-framework-arab.

to follow up on progress achieved towards the implementation of selected SDGs. It should further enhance capacity at country level and support efforts of national experts to collect focused data, analyse them using a dedicated framework and interpret meaningfully the results to provide policymakers with an overall view of their respective country's food security situation while also outlining alternative paths to address the situation.

The country overviews were produced by ESCWA with data delivered by national experts who provided or reviewed the underlying data (see attached list) and from global databases, as appropriate. For some countries, critical data are still missing, which should serve as a call to action to collect and provide the necessary data as the basis of more accurate and focused advice. The data were collected prior to the COVID-19 pandemic; thus, some results might not reflect the current situation. It is hoped that the report will raise the necessary awareness so that countries can make additional efforts to remediate the lack of data.

Food security dashboard

Arab region



2010 Data: Latest Data:

Performance: High: Proceed Action | Average: More Action | Low: Urgent Action | No Data

Food security indicators, world vs. Arab region

Indicators		World		Arab region			
		Latest		2010	Latest		Trend
Code	Description	Value	Year	Value	Value	Year	
CORE INDICATORS							
CO1	Undernourishment (R) %	10.8	2016	11.5	12.1	2016	Yellow
CO2	Food insecurity (R) %	9.2	2018	n.a.	12.2	2016	
CO3	Obesity (R) %	13.0	2016	24.6	28.4	2016	Red
AVAILABILITY INDICATORS							
AV1	Wheat yields - %	n.a.		76.5	82.2	2017	Green
AV2	Agriculture expenditure - index	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
AV3	Food loss (R) %	n.a.		7.3	6.8	2013	Green
AV4	Dietary energy supply - %	n.a.		131	131	2017	Yellow
AV5	Wheat Import dependency (R) %	n.a.		62.5	65.0	2012	Yellow
AV6	Agriculture water (R) %	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
ACCESS INDICATORS							
AC1	Poverty (R) %	26.2	2015	n.a.	16.6	mult.	
AC2	Food consumption (R) %	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
AC3	Unemployment (R) %	5.0	2018	9.6	10.4	mult.	Red
AC4	Logistics - index	2.8	2016	2.6	2.7	2016	Green
AC5	Inflation (R) %	2.5	2018	5.7	12.8	mult.	Red
UTILIZATION INDICATORS							
UT1	Drinking water access - %	88.5	2015	84.3	86.9	2015	Yellow
UT2	Sanitation access - %	68.0	2015	78.9	80.8	2015	Yellow
UT3	Child stunting (R) %	22.2	2017	n.a.	22.9	mult.	
UT4	Child wasting (R) %	7.5	2017	n.a.	8.7	mult.	
UT5	Women anaemia (R) %	32.8	2016	34.2	35.5	2016	Yellow
STABILITY INDICATORS							
ST1	Climate change (R) - index	n.a.		n.a.	0.1	2019	
ST2	Price Anomalies (R) - index	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
ST3	Political stability - ranking	n.a.		20	14	2017	Red
ST4	Production variability (R) - $1,000/capita	n.a.		10.3	10.1	2016	Yellow
ST5	Supply variability (R) - kcal/cap/day	n.a.		32.8	29.8	2013	Green

(R): Reversed During Normalization n.a.= Not Available mult.= Multiple years

Red: Negative Trend Yellow: Neutral Trend Green: Positive Trend

Source: Computed by ESCWA.

Country background

A. Natural resources

In Iraq, about 13 per cent of the land is suitable for agriculture with an additional 10 per cent considered pasture land. However, since the 1970s, about half the arable land was lost due to soil salinity.[1] Most of the arable land are in the north and north-east and are rain-fed, and the remainder in the Tigris and Euphrates river valleys are irrigated. Rainfall and the Tigris and Euphrates rivers provide most of the renewable water resources needed for agriculture.

Box 1. Refugees and IDPs

WFP reports that the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in December 2018 stood at 1.8 million, down from 2.7 million in 2017. The number of returnees, who require special attention, was 4.17 million while the number of Syrian refugees stood at 260,000. The numbers, however, are constantly changing as the movement in and out of the camps remains high due to a mixture of political, security and economic considerations.

The overall food security situation is slowly improving following the end of the war in 2017, but the country remains in political and security transition. It is still faced with substantial challenges that include economic precariousness, high unemployment, inadequate public services, and poor standards of living, among others. As a result, some of the returnees go back to camps because of poor security and livelihood options (WFP, 2020).

The Humanitarian Needs Overview report indicates that 6.7 million people out of a population of 36 million are in need of humanitarian assistance. WFP is the main organization dealing with the provision of support to IDPs and refugees, and the programme's main goal is to address food security through cash and food transfers.

Source: World Food Programme (WFP), 2018; WFP, 2020; and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2019.

1 Kennedy and others, 2020.

B. Socioeconomy

WithThe gross domestic product (GDP) stands at about $225 billion with a per capita GDP of about $5,880.[2] The agriculture sector represents about 2 per cent of GDP.[3] The economy is dominated by the oil and gas sectors, which bring in most of the foreign currency needed for economic development.

Iraq suffered economically from the early 1980s to the late 2000s due to successive wars and economic sanctions. It has, however, rebounded since the end of the Second Gulf War, but has yet to reach its levels of the early 1990s.

C. Agriculture and food security

Iraq is slowly rising from its three decades of instability and is attempting to rebuild State, nation and society. The agricultural sector has taken its toll from the wars and economic sanctions that have prevailed since the 1980s, which deprived many of their livelihoods, while there are still hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people (IDPs). Some provinces have been affected more than others, and WFP estimates, for instance, that 40 per cent of the agricultural production capacity was lost in the northern provinces due to wars, with 2.5 million people vulnerable to food insecurity.[4] Most of these are IDPs, refugees and returnees.

2 World Bank, n. d.a.
3 Ibid.
4 World Food Programme (WFP), 2018.

Data and trends

A. Core indicators

- **Prevalence of undernourishment (CO1)** continues to be high at around 28 per cent indicating serious food insecurity issues. The value is more than double the Arab region's average (around 12 per cent) in 2016 driven by poor socioeconomic conditions following decades of wars and sanctions;
- **Prevalence of severe food insecurity (CO2)** appears to reaffirm the undernourishment data as they show that 22.5 per cent of the population was suffering from severe food insecurity in 2016. This prevalence is much higher than the average of the Arab region (12.2 per cent) as food supply and production are still inadequate;
- **Prevalence of adult obesity (CO3)** increased from 26.9 per cent in 2010 to 30.4 per cent in 2016, which is slightly higher than the Arab average of 28.4 per cent. It is an indication of a potential nutritional transition despite the challenging situation. In 2016, obesity among men was 23.4 per cent whereas it was 37 per cent among women.

B. Availability

- **Wheat yield to potential (AV1)** increased from 2 tons/ha in 2010 to 2.8 tons/ha in 2017. Although still far from the estimated potentially achievable yield of 4.73 tons/ha.[5] This increase from 42 per cent to 59 per cent is a positive step forward in closing the wheat yield gap;
- **Agriculture orientation index (AV2)** data are not available;
- **Food losses to food available (AV3)** increased slightly from 6.5 per cent to 6.6 per cent between 2010 and 2019 respectively. However, it should be noted that the value might not tell the full story as several food products lacked data;
- **Average dietary energy supply adequacy (AV4)** decreased between 2010 and 2017 from an already relatively low 111 per cent to 109 per cent, respectively, indicating a reduced availability of food (calories) and the high prevalence of undernourishment (CO1). The poorest and most vulnerable are usually impacted

5 Mueller, N. D. and others, 2012.

first. In 2017, the value was well below the Arab region's average of 131 per cent;

- **What import dependency (AV5)** decreased from 58.4 per cent in 2010 to 51.8 per cent in 2012 but remains high for a country that produces a relatively large quantity of cereals (approximately 4.43 million tons in 2019) that make up a major share of its diet;
- **Water resources used in agriculture (AV6)** stood at around 40 per cent in 2018. This is the second-lowest value recorded in the Arab region, in the period following 2010.

C. Access

- **Poverty at $3.2/day (AC1)** reported at 17.9 per cent of the population in 2012. This value exceeds the Arab regional average of 16.6 per cent of 2015. Poverty poses a serious challenge to access to food;
- **Food consumption share of expenditures (AC2)** has no data;
- **Unemployment rate (AC3)** slightly decreased between 2010 and 2016 from 8.6 per cent to 8 per cent, respectively. Unemployment among men stood at almost 7.1 per cent in 2017, whereas for women it was at 12.4 per cent, indicating a large gender gap;[6]
- **Logistical performance (AC4)** increased almost insignificantly from 2.1 to 2.2 between 2010 and 2016, and it remains lower than the Arab regional average of 2.7 (2016), an indication of potential challenges in the food supply chain;
- **Inflation, consumer prices (AC5)** was low as it has been recorded during the period between 2010 and 2017 (2.4 per cent and 0.2 per cent, respectively). An excessively low inflation could be an indication of low demand and, thus, low growth rates for the economy.

D. Utilization

- **Population using at least basic drinking water services (UT1)** stood at 86.1 per cent in 2015, an improvement compared to 82.5 per cent in 2010. Additional efforts are required to reach the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their targets;
- **Population using at least basic sanitation services (UT2)** reached 85.7 per cent in 2015, compared to 83.3 per cent in 2010. Improvements are significant to enhance the safety aspect of food utilization by limiting the spread of environmental-borne illnesses;
- **Stunting in children under five years (UT3)** stood at 9.9 per cent in 2018. It is within the low range of the severity-of-malnutrition scale of the World Health Organization (WHO) and improved when compared to 2010 when it was at 22.3 per cent;
- **Wasting in children under five years (UT4)** stood at 2.5 per cent in 2018. It is within the low range of WHO's severity-of malnutrition-scale and improved when compared to the 2010 value of 6.9 per cent. It indicates a positive trend towards achieving the World Health Assembly (WHA) targets in 2030;[7]

6 World Bank, n. d.b.
7 FAO and others, 2019.

- **Prevalence of anaemia among women (UT5)** witnessed a very slight decrease from 30.1 per cent to 29.1 per cent between 2010 and 2016, respectively, but remains substantially higher than WHA's target for 2030.

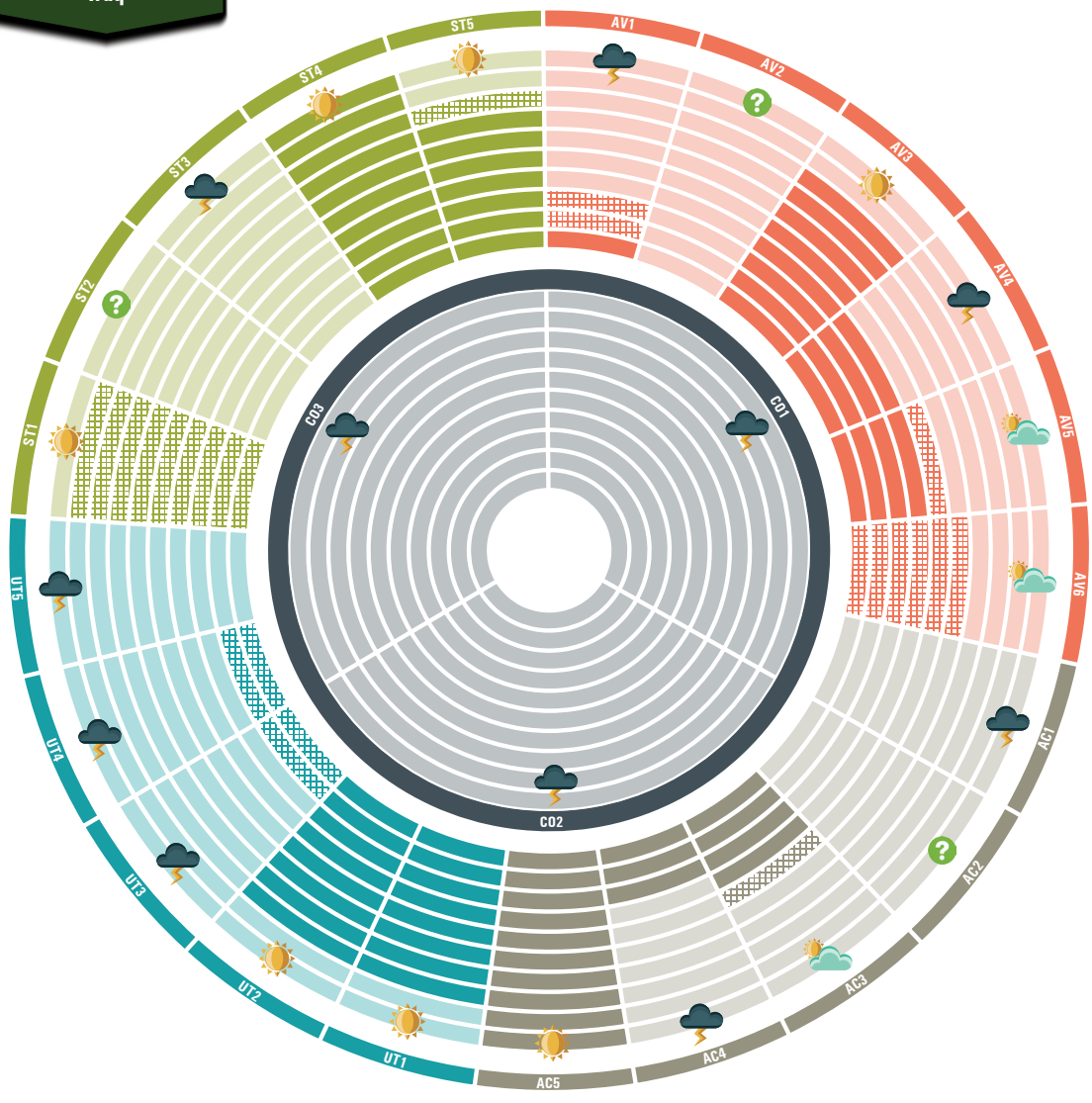
E. Stability

- **Climate change vulnerability (ST1)** was at 0.07 in 2019, indicating that the country is not heavily affected by the combined effects of increased climate-related disasters, loss of agricultural productivity and sea-level rise;
- **Food price anomalies (ST2)** data are not available;
- **Political stability (ST3)** in Iraq is very low and stood at 2.4 in 2010 and 2017, an indication that the country remains under sociopolitical stress;
- **Food production variability (ST4)** increased substantially from $3,900/capita[8] in 2010 to $13,400/capita in 2016. This insinuates a large fluctuation in the stability of food production;
- **Food supply variability (ST5)** decreased from 41 kcal/capita/day in 2010 to 27 kcal/capita/day in 2013, indicating a smaller gap in calorific variability of food supply.

8 Constant 2004-2006 International USD.

Food security dashboard

Iraq



2010 Data: Latest Data:

Performance: High: Proceed Action | Average: More Action | Low: Urgent Action | No Data

Food security indicators, Iraq

Indicators		Arab		Iraq			
		Latest		2010	Latest		Trend
Code	Description	Value	Year	Value	Value	Year	
CORE INDICATORS							
CO1	Undernourishment (R) %	12.1	2016	27.3	27.7	2016	●
CO2	Food insecurity (R) %	12.2	2016	n.a.	22.5	2016	
CO3	Obesity (R) %	28.4	2016	26.9	30.4	2016	●
AVAILABILITY INDICATORS							
AV1	Wheat yields - %	82.2	2017	42.3	59.2	2017	●
AV2	Agriculture expenditure - index	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
AV3	Food loss (R) %	6.8	2013	6.5	6.6	2019	●
AV4	Dietary energy supply - %	131	2017	111	109	2017	●
AV5	Wheat Import dependency (R) %	65.0	2012	58.4	51.8	2012	●
AV6	Agriculture water (R) %	n.a.		57.2	39.3	2018	●
ACCESS INDICATORS							
AC1	Poverty (R) %	16.6	mult.	n.a.	17.9	2012	
AC2	Food consumption (R) %	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
AC3	Unemployment (R) %	10.4	mult.	8.6	8.0	2016	●
AC4	Logistics - index	2.7	2016	2.1	2.2	2016	●
AC5	Inflation (R) %	12.8	mult.	2.4	0.2	2017	●
UTILIZATION INDICATORS							
UT1	Drinking water access - %	86.9	2015	82.5	86.1	2015	●
UT2	Sanitation access - %	80.8	2015	83.3	85.7	2015	●
UT3	Child stunting (R) %	22.9	mult.	22.3	9.9	2018	●
UT4	Child wasting (R) %	8.7	mult.	6.9	2.5	2018	●
UT5	Women anaemia (R) %	35.5	2016	30.1	29.1	2016	●
STABILITY INDICATORS							
ST1	Climate change (R) - index	0.1	2019	n.a.	0.07	2019	
ST2	Price Anomalies (R) - index	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.		
ST3	Political stability - ranking	14	2017	2	2	2017	●
ST4	Production variability (R) - $1,000/capita	10.1	2016	3.9	13.4	2016	●
ST5	Supply variability (R) - kcal/cap/day	29.8	2013	41.0	27.0	2013	●

(R): Reversed During Normalization n.a.= Not Available mult.= Multiple years

● Red: Negative Trend ● Yellow: Neutral Trend ● Green: Positive Trend

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, all data figuring in this table and framework were received from national sources.

Food security snapshot

A. Drivers and determinants

The food security framework shows that Iraq is underperforming in the three core pillars of undernourishment (CO1), food insecurity experience (CO2) and obesity (CO3).

Hotspots within the four dimensions of food security include the following:

- **Availability:** wheat yields (AV1) and dietary energy supply (AV4);
- **Access:** poverty (AC1) and logistical performance (AC4);
- **Utilization:** stunting (UT3) and wasting among children (UT4) and anaemia among women (UT5);
- **Stability:** political stability (ST3).

In addition, data are lacking for expenditure in agriculture, food consumption expenditure and price anomalies. Food security is a pressing issue in Iraq because of the large number of IDPs and refugees. The data available indicate that Iraq is caught in the double burden of undernutrition and obesity, both of which fall under the rubric of malnutrition.

A policy framework based on access to food and on the appropriate utilization must be put in place. According to figures for the prevalence of food insecurity, the problem is essentially at the utilization (diet) level, although the high rates of poverty indicate problems at the level of access as well. But Iraq is a relatively resource-rich nation, and poverty is essentially a problem of resource maldistribution rather than of absence of entitlements.

The available official data are sufficient to indicate the extent of the problem: the scores are in the medium-low range for a majority of those indicators for which official data are available, although some progress has been recently achieved.

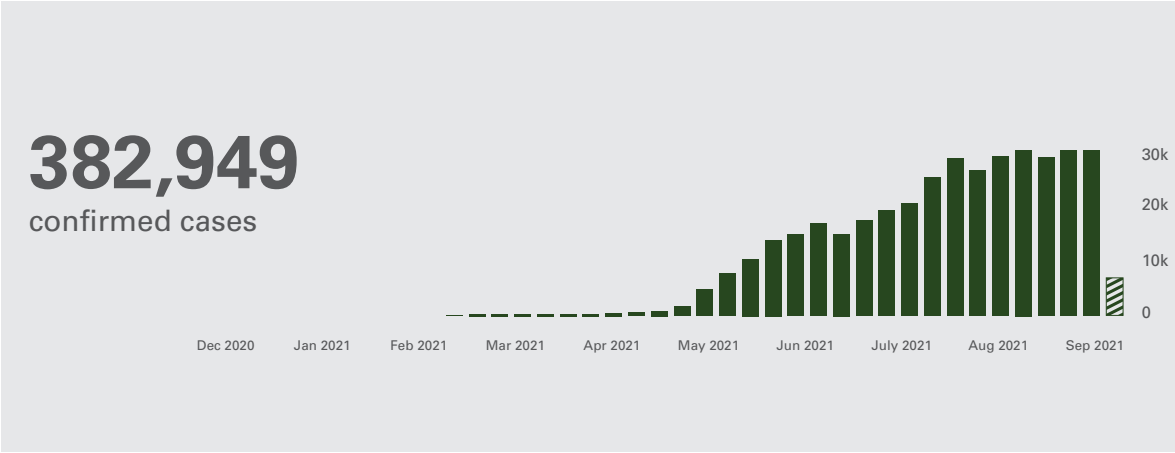
B. Action areas

The wheat yield gap is still wide, and policies for enhancing production must be enacted, which would include greater investments towards the agriculture sector notably to improve yields in rain-fed systems and expand irrigation. The dietary energy supply is low, coupled with obesity, indicating a profound maldistribution of food. Targeted social policies are essential in order to correct this discrepancy which should not exist in an oil-rich nation. Moreover, the state of sanitation facilities needs to be improved, and State expenditures should prioritize this sector.

Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic reached Iraq in late February 2020 and by, early October, had affected more than 380,000 people with close to 9,500 deaths recorded. Iraq had largely recorded below 100 daily occurrences of COVID-19 until May but has witnessed a gradual increase to reach up to 4,000 cases daily by end-September.[9]

Weekly cases



Source: World Health Organization (WHO), n. d.

Lockdown measures[10] included the closure of borders with all neighbouring countries and restricting movement between governorates.[11] The movement of goods across borders continued. Farmers, herders and workers in the food sector, including the transportation of goods between governorates, were exempt from curfews to prevent disruptions to local production, facilitate the seasonal harvest of wheat and barley, and prevent food shortages in the market.[12] These restrictive measures

9 WHO, n. d.
10 Closure of cinemas, public gathering spaces, religious sites, schools and universities, restricted land and air travels, suspension of trade with Kuwait.
11 Anadolu Agency, 2020.
12 FAO and others, 2020.

delayed food shipments including rice from Vietnam, which threatened the distribution of food aid.[13] For example, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) lacked adequate supplies to deliver food to 75 off-camp families in Chamchamal and Kalar.[14]

In July 2020, food availability was reported stable with an average availability score[15] of 8.5 out of 10.[16] Cereal production for the 2019-2020 harvest season was above average levels. The quantity of wheat harvested stood at about five million tons while that of barley was estimated between 850,000-900,000 tons by July.[17] The Government is considering the possibility of exporting what exceeds local demand.[18] However, there is a shortage in rice availability as only 190,000 tons were available for public distribution by the end of May compared to the yearly needs of 1-1.25 million tons.[19]

During the last two weeks of March, prices of certain food staples increased because of panic buying: the price of sugar doubled in Erbil, the price of potatoes increased by 88 per cent and 50 per cent in Ninewa and Wassit, respectively, and that of eggs increased by 48 per cent in Salah-al-Din.[20] The price of the minimum food baskets increased by 2 per cent in March compared to February, and by 6 per cent in April compared to March.[21] However, in the last two weeks of April, prices slightly decreased in different percentages across governorates.[22] Since then, prices of staple food have been stable with slight fluctuations in different governorates, though doubling in the Anbar and Ninewa governorates.[23] Also, in the absence of the cheap imported fish from Iran and Kuwait, sales of local fish doubled.

In the Spring and early Summer, locust invaded agricultural areas in Iraq affecting 5,000 ha, as well as other pests and rodents affecting among others 7,500 ha of peach and citrus fruits and 4,000 ha of tomatoes while 264 fire incidents between April 21 and June 20, 2020, burnt 3,200 ha of cultivated land in 16 governorates across the country.[24] Also, around 60,000 laying hens were diagnosed with bird flu in mid-May in Ninewah and had to be culled.[25]

Food consumption patterns showed improvement in Ramadan, as the annual charitable payments "zakat"[26] allowed the percentage of respondents with sufficient food consumption to increase by 2 per cent to reach 95 per cent during the first two weeks of May.[27] However, 33.9 per cent of responding households reported difficulty accessing markets in July, one month later.[28]

13 Just Security, 2020.
14 FAO and others, 2020.
15 It is one of the nine dimensions of the Market Functionality Index (MFI) tool. This dimension has two questions related to whether certain goods are scarce or likely to get scarcer in the short run.
16 World Food Programme (WFP), 2020a.
17 FAO and others, 2020.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 World Food Programme (WFP), 2020b.
22 FAO and others, 2020.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Annual payments under the Islamic law that give people incentives allowing them to diversify and adopt a high-quality food intake.
27 FAO and others, 2020.
28 Ibid.

Box 2. Examples of initiatives

Government-led

The Government banned import of selected agricultural products to enhance local production while Kurdistan increased tariffs compared to 2019 especially on vegetables.

It tightened customs procedures, banned transportation across governorates (except for products for Government-owned silos) and fought against smuggling, especially for wheat and barley.

In April, the Government allowed agriculture leaseholders to postpone the payment of land rental charges. It launched a National Food Security Project aiming at increasing self-sufficiency of crops and animal products and endorsing food sovereignty.

It implemented a programme to combat the locust outbreak as well as other pest infestations through aerial and land spraying and trunk injections.

In May, the Government initiated an agricultural emergency plan to decrease the dependency on oil revenues, which included keeping cereals collection points open for farmers.

In June, the Government received a rice shipment, which was distributed to all governorates. It improved the marketing of wheat and accepted wheat from silos not included in the plan, while exempting farmers from financial dues for the last and current year. It promoted date packing and tomato processing and rental of governmental land (1.25-1.5 ha) to plant orchards, among others.

In July, the Government encouraged the cultivation of 250,000 ha with pistachios, olives and cereals to increase local production, and establish income-generating jobs while decreasing rural-urban migration.

Other initiatives

In April, WFP distributed cash assistance to more than 310,000 people, while the Food Security Cluster partners distributed food parcels to 87,210 in-camp individuals and 144,193 out-of-camp individuals.

WFP provided financial support to both in and out-of-camp people in May as a top-up to governmental food aid and to those not receiving governmental support. It assisted a total of 337,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in May and June.

Non-government organizations (NGOs) and charities provided food aid for 1,268,081 beneficiaries in response to the campaign launched by the Government in March aiming at encouraging food donations.

In June, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) allocated $1.1 million to the Food Security Cluster to carry out agriculture-related activities.

Local NGOs distributed food parcels to 54,394 households by the end of June with an additional 102,925 people receiving food aid from humanitarian organizations.

Source: FAO and others, 2020.

References

Anadolu Agency (2020). New death raises Iraq's COVID-19 fatalities to 12. Available at https://www.aa.com.tr/en/latest-on-coronavirus-outbreak/new-death-raises-iraqs-covid-19-fatalities-to-12/1770631 (accessed September 30, 2020).

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and others (2019). The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2019: Safeguarding against Economic Slowdowns and Downturns. Rome. Available at http://www.fao.org/3/ca5162en/ca5162en.pdf.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and others (2020). Iraq COVID-19 Food Security Monitor Weekly Update (several issues).

Just Security (2020). COVID-19 and Humanitarian Access in Starvation-Affected Countries: Part I - Yemen. Available at https://www.justsecurity.org/69374/covid-19-and-humanitarian-access-in-starvation-affected-countries-part-1-yemen/ (accessed September 30, 2020)

Kennedy, H. and others (2020). Iraq. Encyclopedia Britannica. Available at https://www.britannica.com/place/Iraq (accessed March 2020).

Mueller, N.D. and others (2012). Closing yield gaps through nutrient and water management. Nature, vol. 490, pp. 254-257; doi:10.1038/nature11420. Available at https://www.nature.com/articles/nature11420?platform=oscar&draft=journal.

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (2019). Iraq: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2019. Available at https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/irq_2019_hno.pdf.

World Food Programme (WFP) (2018). Iraq: Annual Country Report 2018. Available at https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000104224/download/?_ga=2.56060840.2088269476.1585577881-543803018.1562923087.

_____ (2020a). Market Functionality Index - Technical Guidance. Available at https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000114503/download/ (accessed October 5, 2020).

_____ (2020b). Iraq Market Monitor Report (several issues). Available at https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000114848/download/.

World Health Organization (WHO) (n. d.). COVID-19 dashboard. Available at https://covid19.who.int/region/emro/country/iq (accessed October 6, 2020).

World Bank (n. d.a). Open data. Available at https://data.worldbank.org/ (accessed March 2020).

_____ (n. d.b). World Development Indicators. Available at https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators (accessed March 2020).

21-00184