

## HOW MANY ARE FOOD INSECURE?

The survey found that an estimated **930,000 people** are food insecure, representing **3 percent** of the total population.

An additional **6.4 million**, almost **22 percent** of the population, are extremely dependent on the PDS food rations, without which they could become food insecure.

Despite its magnitude, the current food security situation is an improvement when compared with 2005 where an estimated 4 million people (15.4 percent of the population) were classified as food insecure and an additional 8.3 million people as vulnerable (31.8 percent). Several factors may have contributed to this, including recent improvements in the security situation and the economy, as well as enhanced humanitarian efforts during 2006-2007.

However, the situation in Iraq remains highly volatile. Any deterioration in security would impact negatively on the PDS and the delivery of humanitarian assistance, as well as reduce economic opportunities.

**Malnutrition:** the global acute malnutrition level in Iraq is classified as acceptable, with about 4.7 percent of children under five wasted. However, about 21.8 percent of children are stunted, reflecting a poor level of chronic malnutrition.

## WHERE DO THE FOOD INSECURE LIVE?

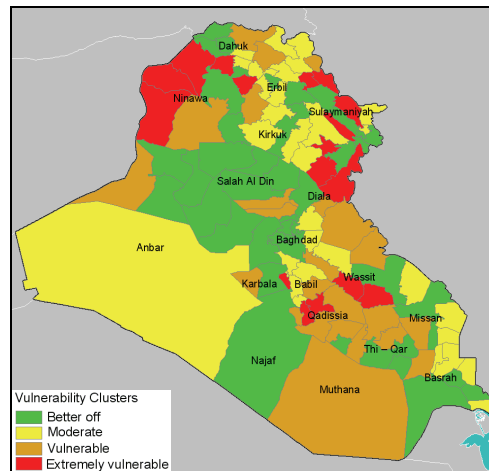
Four clusters, or four groups of districts, were identified as follows:

**Cluster 1: “Better off”**, comprising 18.4 million mainly urban (66 percent) people in 44 districts, of whom only one percent were defined as food insecure and five percent vulnerable, with low to moderate poverty and food insecurity and low malnutrition.

**Cluster 2: “Moderate”**, comprising 4.9 million mainly rural (75 percent) people in 30 districts, of whom two percent are food insecure and 10 percent vulnerable, with low levels of food insecurity and malnutrition and moderate levels of poverty.

**Cluster 3: “Vulnerable”**, comprising 3.4 million people in 24 districts, of whom five percent are food insecure and 15 percent vulnerable, with moderate to high poverty and malnutrition levels.

**Cluster 4: “Extremely vulnerable”**, comprising 2.9 million in 17 districts, of whom 16 percent are food insecure and 32 percent vulnerable, with the highest rates of food insecurity and poverty in the country.



## Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis in Iraq 2007/2008



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## OBJECTIVE AND INTRODUCTION

The after-effects of the 2003 war and general economic decline, exacerbated by 13 years of sanctions, have had a severe impact on the food security of the population, many of whom depend on the monthly food ration provided by the Public Distribution System (PDS). In February 2006, violence sparked by the destruction of the Holy Shrine in Samarra led to the internal displacement of an estimated 1.5 million people, one of the largest displacements ever recorded.

Since then, security continued to deteriorate, jeopardizing the social security network of the country, although there has been some recent improvement.

Given that the situation in Iraq has changed significantly since the last food security survey of mid-2005, this study was intended to provide updated information on malnutrition and the food security situation, to assist policymakers.

The survey covered almost 26,000 households in all 18 governorates of Iraq. The questionnaire for the study was in three languages (Arabic, English and Kurdish).

The main objective of the study is to provide an accurate and detailed assessment of the current food security and vulnerability situation in Iraq; to assess the causes and risk factors for food insecurity and childhood malnutrition; and to identify pockets of vulnerability where assistance may be required in future. Specifically, this study set out to answer the following questions:

- Who are the food insecure?
- Why are they food insecure?
- How many are food insecure?
- Where do the food insecure live?

## WHO ARE THE FOOD INSECURE?

Households most vulnerable to food insecurity included non-skilled workers, agricultural workers and unemployed heads of households. Among households relying on any one of these activities, almost one in every four was either food insecure or vulnerable to food insecurity.

The least affected households mainly relied on self-employment in non-agricultural work and public service.

Characteristics associated with food insecurity include:

- Lack of sufficient income to complement or replace the monthly food basket when distribution is disrupted;
- Employment as non-skilled worker, agricultural worker, or unemployment among heads of households;
- Households headed by women;
- Current or recent resettlement among IDPs;
- Chronic malnutrition among children.

## WHY ARE THEY FOOD INSECURE?

Chronic poverty, inadequate food and non-food purchasing power, a lack of dietary diversity due to the absence of or shortfalls in the PDS are all contributory factors to Iraq's food insecurity.

Decades of conflict and economic sanctions have had serious effects. The consequences have been rising unemployment, illiteracy and, for some families, the loss of wage-earners. Iraq's food insecurity is not simply due to a lack of production of sufficient food at the national level, but also a failure

of livelihoods to guarantee access to sufficient food at the household level.

**Food availability:** Iraq is experiencing an exceptional shortfall in food supplies and production. The Government relies heavily on imports. The domestic production of wheat, the basic staple, represents at most one third of total supply in a given year. About 18 percent of rice consumed is produced locally.

**Food access:** Food insecurity is an access problem. Livelihoods cannot guarantee access to sufficient food at household level. Wealth and income are key determinants of household food security. About 83 percent of the food insecure belong to the poorest groups.

Iraq has a high level of unemployment and low rates of income. Human capital and skill levels among the poor are also very low; as a result, the poor experience serious difficulties in gaining employment.

Disparities between urban and rural regions are evident through higher rates of rural unemployment and lower access to essential service, including water and sanitation, education, health and transport.

**Markets:** Ensuring well functioning and integrated markets could help prevent sudden spikes in commodity prices. Regional price variability does not appear to be a major determinant in household food access. However, this could change if food supply through the PDS diminishes significantly.