The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has continued to affect Iraq. As of 24 August 2020, the World Health Organization reported 204,341 cases and 6,428 deaths, a roughly 40% increase compared to 27 July. Although movement restrictions eased and the country emerged from strict curfews, the Iraqi government and KRG continue to enforce measures to prevent the spread of the virus, such as mandating that citizens wear face masks outside, or risk an IQD 20,000 fine, to prevent the spread of the virus, such as mandating that citizens wear face masks outside, or risk an IQD 20,000 fine, and maintain physical distance.

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ternment silos.

On 17 August, the WFP Hunger Monitoring System revealed that around 8.1% of households, representing 3.1 million people, did not have sufficient food consumption during the third week of August, an increase of 400,000 people compared to the first week of August, but still below the peak of roughly 3.5 million people in mid-July.

The Plant Protection Directorate has begun a new control operation against the Corn Stalk Borer, a maize pest.

II. Overview

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The global economic slowdown associated with pandemic containment measures decreased the demand for oil and lowered prices, with consequences for oil exporting countries. In Iraq, oil revenue accounts for 90% of the government budget and developments in oil prices have a significant impact on country’s finances. Over the past two weeks, Basra heavy oil prices have remained stable, fluctuating between USD 45 and USD 46 per barrel, up from minimum of USD 18.7 per barrel reached in April 2020, but well below USD 56.5 per barrel, the price recorded one year ago. According to World Bank estimates, Iraq would need at least a US$58/barrel oil price to meet its finances. Over the past two weeks, Basra heavy oil prices have remained stable, fluctuating between USD 45 and USD 46 per barrel, up from minimum of USD 18.7 per barrel reached in April 2020, but well below USD 56.5 per barrel, the price recorded one year ago. According to World Bank estimates, Iraq would need at least a US$58/barrel oil price to meet its finances. Over the past two weeks, Basra heavy oil prices have remained stable, fluctuating between USD 45 and USD 46 per barrel, up from minimum of USD 18.7 per barrel reached in April 2020, but well below USD 56.5 per barrel, the price recorded one year ago. According to World Bank estimates, Iraq would need at least a US$58/barrel oil price to meet its finances. Over the past two weeks, Basra heavy oil prices have remained stable, fluctuating between USD 45 and USD 46 per barrel, up from minimum of USD 18.7 per barrel reached in April 2020, but well below USD 56.5 per barrel, the price recorded one year ago. According to World Bank estimates, Iraq would need at least a US$58/barrel oil price to meet its finances. Over the past two weeks, Basra heavy oil prices have remained stable, fluctuating between USD 45 and USD 46 per barrel, up from minimum of USD 18.7 per barrel reached in April 2020, but well below USD 56.5 per barrel, the price recorded one year ago. According to World Bank estimates, Iraq would need at least a US$58/barrel oil price to meet its finances. Over the past two weeks, Basra heavy oil prices have remained stable, fluctuating between USD 45 and USD 46 per barrel, up from minimum of USD 18.7 per barrel reached in April 2020, but well below USD 56.5 per barrel, the price recorded one year ago. According to World Bank estimates, Iraq would need at least a US$58/barrel oil price to meet its...
Other Challenges. The MoA Plant Protection Directorate (PPD) continued the campaigns against Red Palm Weevil in Basrah and rodents in Najaf and Diwania, and began a new control operation against the Corn Stalk Borer, a maize pest. Operations will cover all of Iraq, except Basrah, Thi Qar and Karbala governorates. In total, 75,000 ha of maize are being cultivated this season across the entire country except the aforementioned governorates. This scale of production is average, given that the 14 year average is approximately 73,000 ha of maize cultivation. Thus, the prevention of the Corn Stalk Borer is essential and PPD will apply chemical pesticides using sprayers from the ground.

IV. Food Supply: Markets (farm to market)

The Minister of Agriculture affirmed Iraq’s interest in maintaining agricultural and economic relations with Syria, particularly to increase trade in agricultural goods. Historically, Syria has been an important agriculture trading partner and, although trade stalled during the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant’s occupation, recovered towards the end of 2019, particularly when trade resumed between Al Qaim (Iraq) and Al Bukamal (Syria) on 30 September. MoA announced that Iraq will accept imports of yellow maize and soybeans for poultry feed until 1 November 2020, a measure to support the breeders of laying and broiler chickens.

In response to the Beirut port explosion on 4 August, Iraq’s Cabinet agreed to send approximately 13,000 tons of wheat grain, 3,600 cubic meters of diesel and medical supplies and equipment to Lebanon to aid its recovery.

V. Food Demand (markets to consumers)

Prices. Compared to the first week of August, national average prices of basic food commodities remained relatively stable during the third week. On average, vegetable oil and rice prices increased 1%. These bi weekly increases in prices were due to changes in Anbar governorate by 20% (IQD 1,250 to 1,500) for both commodities. However, the price of vegetable oil decreased by 8% (IQD 1,250 to 1,150 per liter) in Kirkuk.

Vegetable prices continued to fluctuate, particularly for products that were in season. Compared with the first week of August the national average price of tomatoes increased by 15%. In Erbil and Salah Al Din, tomato prices increased 100% (IQD 250 to 500 per kg), and 50% in Baghdad and Diyala (IQD 500 to 750 per kg) and Al Muthanna by 43% (350 to 500 IQD per kg). On the other hand, tomato prices decreased in Nineveh by 50% (500 to 250 IQD). Potato prices increased from IQD 400 to 750 per kg in Maysan, IQD 500 to 750 per kg in Baghdad, and IQD 333 to 500 per kg in Kirkuk, but decreased in Nineveh by 30% (IQD 500 to 350 per kg), and by 33% in Thi Qar (IQD 750 to 500 per kg).

Seasonal fruit prices, in comparison with the first week of August, started to decline in some southern governorates. The price of dates decreased 33% in both Thi Qar (IQD 3,000 to 2,000 per kg) and Maysan (IQD 1,500 to 1,000 per kg). Date prices also decreased in Karbala by 20% (IQD 2,500 to 2,000 per kg) and 13% in Babel (IQD 2,000 to 1,750 per kg).

Consumption Patterns. On August 17, WFP Hunger Monitoring System data revealed that around 8.1% households, which represents 3.1 million people in Iraq, did not have sufficient food consumption during the third week of August. Compared to the same time last month, this is an increase of around 400,000 people. These estimates were based on a statistically significant sample — on a monthly basis, 1,620 households were interviewed via the telephone. Al Muthana governorate has the highest prevalence of people with insufficient food consumption. Additionally, 13% people reported using negative food-based coping strategies. Relying on less expensive food remained the most commonly adopted strategy, where 29.8% adopted that coping strategy, which represents an estimated 12.26 million individuals.

VI. Food Supply Chain for Vulnerable Populations

WFP continues to provide monthly food assistance to more than 332,000 IDPs and refugees residing in the formal camps, including an additional 37,000 new IDPs and refugees whose food security has been impacted by COVID-19. In the IDP camps, with support and coordination with Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMWD), WFP complements and tops-up government in-kind rations with cash assistance to ensure that beneficiaries have dignified, flexible and sufficient resources to cover their basic nutritional needs. Additionally, the Barzani Charity Foundation distributed 10,000 food parcels in Erbil, Kirkuk, Sulaimaniyah and Dohuk governorates.