



**ERADICATE
EXTREME POVERTY
AND HUNGER**

Seven percent of Iraq's population suffers from hunger or food deprivation - that is, they do not consume enough calories on a daily basis to

meet their minimum needs.¹ Iraq is aiming to reduce this figure to 1% by 2015 (Millennium Development Goal 1). Although progress has been made in reducing hunger in Iraq, there remain over two million people who do not get enough food to eat.²

During the 1990s, rising food prices, conflict and sanctions caused the proportion of Iraqis who did not consume the daily recommended energy intake to rise from 2% in 1990 to a peak of 30% in 1998. In spite of the reduction

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in hunger over the past decade, malnutrition persists inside Iraq. Although levels of malnutrition are improving, more than one in five children in Iraq (22%) aged under five years continues to show stunted growth, 5% suffer from wasting and 9% are underweight.³

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Food deprivation and hunger are particularly evident in large households and households where the head of the household is elderly, unemployed or economically inactive,

illiterate or whose primary income source is agriculture. This type of household is also among the most vulnerable and poor, with higher prevalence in rural areas, where economic and income generating opportunities are limited.

Food deprived households are concentrated particularly in Basrah, Diyala, Babylon, Salah al Deen, Kerbala and Muthanna governorates, where the

prevalence of food deprivation ranges from 17% to 51%.

Food Availability and Access in Iraq

Food insecurity in Iraq exists because people lack the financial resources to buy sufficient quantity and quality of food, not because it is not available. Aside from locally produced

goods, imported food products are plentiful in Iraqi markets. In terms of major crops such as wheat and rice, demand exceeds supply through local production. Generally, 60% of wheat demand is satisfied through local production but only 26% during the 2008 drought year. Similarly, less than one third of household demand for rice is satisfied by local production and only 19% during the 2008 drought year.

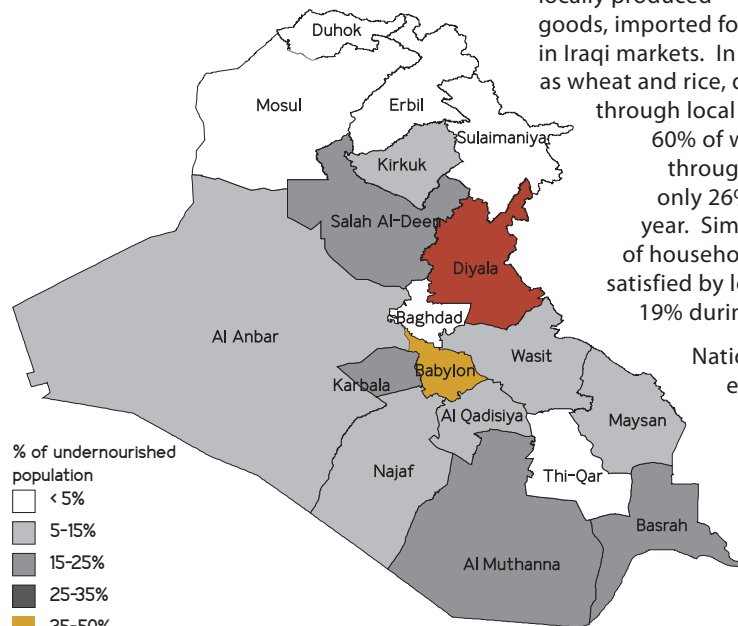
National Iraqi daily dietary energy supply is estimated at 3,191 kilocalories per capita in 2007. During the same year, average per capita dietary energy consumption in Iraq was 2,580 kilocalories. Accordingly,

What is hunger?

Acute hunger or starvation often receives most attention. Yet daily undernourishment is a less visible form of hunger -- but it affects many more people. Its victims must live on significantly less than the recommended kilocalories that the average person needs to lead a healthy life. The body compensates for the lack of energy by slowing down its physical and mental activities. A hungry mind cannot concentrate, a hungry body does not take initiative, a hungry child loses all desire to play and study. Hunger also weakens the immune system. Deprived of the right nutrition, hungry children are especially vulnerable and become too weak to fight off disease and may die from common infections like measles and diarrhoea. Each year, almost 11 million children worldwide die before reaching the age of five; malnutrition is associated with 53 percent of these deaths. Today, almost one person in six does not get enough food to be healthy and lead an active life, making hunger and malnutrition the number one risk to health worldwide.

(Caulfield et al., The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. 2004 July)

Hunger Map of Iraq 2007

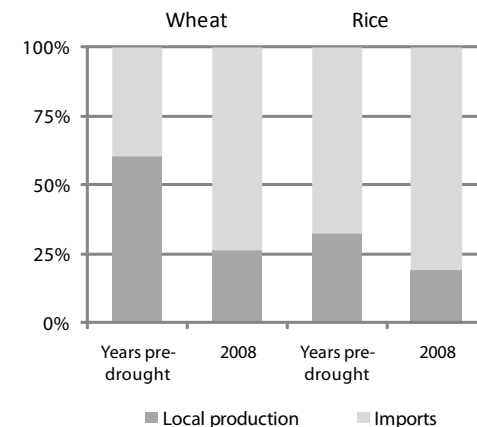


% of undernourished population
 □ < 5%
 □ 5-15%
 □ 15-25%
 □ 25-35%
 □ 35-50%
 □ > 50%

Source: FAO, WFP, UNICEF, COSIT, KRISO: Food Deprivation in Iraq, 2010

dietary energy supply exceeds household demand. This again illustrates that the two million people in Iraq who are not consuming enough food each day are hungry because they cannot afford to buy food.

Origin of cereal supply



Percent of children under 5 years suffering from:		
	2005	2007
Stunting	26	22
Wasting	9	5
Underweight	16	9

Sources: 2006, Gol/WFP, Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis in Iraq; 2008, Gol/WFP, Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA)

¹ WFP/FAO/UNICEF/COSIT/KRISO, Food Deprivation in Iraq, 2010

² Ibid

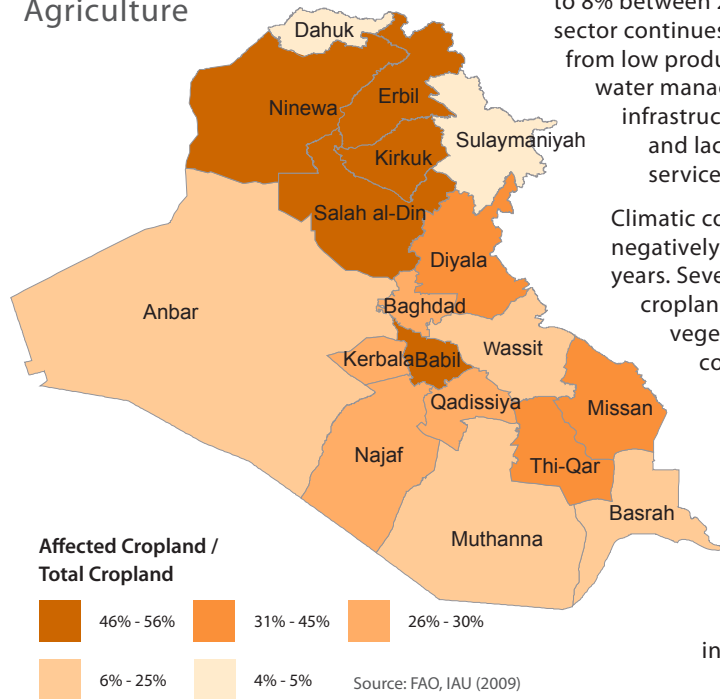
³ Ibid

Iraq's Public Distribution System (PDS)

The Government of Iraq (GOI) has kept hunger in check through the PDS, a universal food ration which started in the early 1990s. As much as 53% of the dietary energy consumed by Iraqis today is acquired through the PDS. Overall, Iraqi households spend on average 35% of incomes on food, rising to 53% among poor households in southern and northern governorates.⁴

⁴ Ibid.

Drought and Impact on Agriculture



"53% of the dietary energy consumed by Iraqis today is acquired through the PDS"

As Iraq is now in the process of reforming the PDS, all efforts are being made to ensure that the most vulnerable do not go hungry during the reform process and for implementing long term and sustainable solutions to hunger in Iraq.

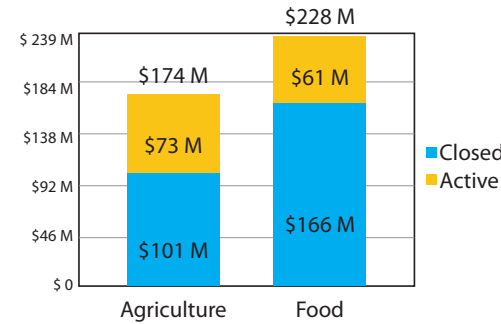
Agriculture and food security in Iraq

Iraq's agriculture has the potential to contribute to eradicating hunger by producing food, creating sustainable jobs and providing the basis for growth in other industries. Agriculture's share of non-oil GDP decreased from 29% to 8% between 2002 and 2008. The sector continues to suffer especially from low productivity due to poor water management, inadequate infrastructure, poor soil quality and lack of extension services.

Climatic conditions have impacted negatively on productivity in recent years. Severe drought led 39% of cropland to suffer a reduction in vegetation coverage for two consecutive years between 2007 and 2009. In 2008, farmers lost up to 55% of their wheat harvest. The combined effects of increasing food prices and bad harvests continue to heighten the potential for poverty and food deprivation, particularly in rural areas.

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UN and Government Response



The GOI is committed to MDG1 to eliminate severe poverty and hunger. Through the National Development Plan (NDP) 2010-2014 the GOI aims to increase agricultural development and self-sufficiency, and improve livelihoods and food security.⁵

The UN will support the GOI in addressing these priorities through the UN Development Assistance Framework 2011-2014 with a focus on the environment, essential service delivery in agriculture-dependent communities and ensuring nutrition for the most vulnerable.⁶

The Ministry of Agriculture's FAO supported Medium-Term

⁵ Government of Iraq, National Development Plan 2010-2014 (2010)
⁶ UN Country Team in Iraq, United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2011-2014 (2010)

Agricultural Strategic Plan 2008-2012, rests on three pillars. The first supports policy reforms, to provide an enabling environment for a market based agriculture sector. The second aims to improve the capacity of public agriculture institutions. The third pillar includes investments in irrigation and rural infrastructure, agricultural markets, rehabilitation of farm inputs, extension and animal health services.

WFP is supporting the Ministry of Education to implement a National School Feeding programme. WFP will implement the school feeding programme for the 2010-2011 academic year, targeting the most vulnerable districts of Iraq while concurrently building the capacity of the Ministry of Education to implement from September 2011 onwards. This is being complemented by WFP support to the GOI in reforming social safety nets for vulnerable groups.



Photo by UNICEF/Iraq/2008/Sabah Arar