



GIEWS Country Brief Iraq

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FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Ongoing conflict jeopardizes agricultural production despite favourable weather conditions
- Average cereal harvest gathered in 2016 resulting in stable import requirement
- Food prices declined nationally in December 2016
- About 2.4 million estimated to be food insecure, with IDPs and returnees most vulnerable

Favourable growing conditions but conflict affects production

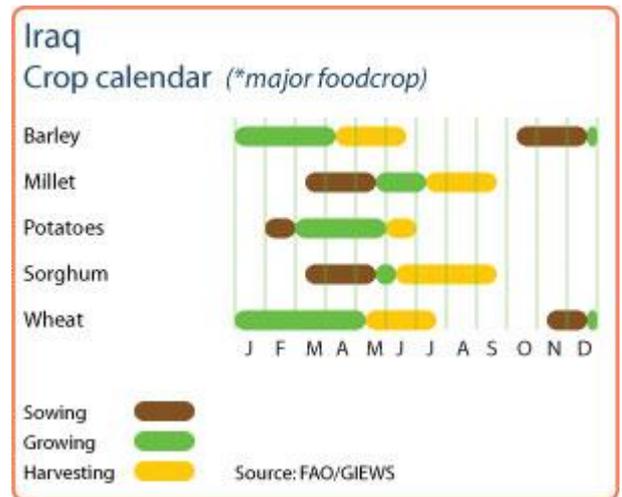
Planting of winter barley and wheat for harvesting from April 2017 was completed by mid-December. Current weather conditions remain favourable for cereal crop development after an early season dryness in November followed by higher than normal precipitation in December replenishing soil moisture.

Details about the level of actual plantings are not yet available. Concerns prevail about the progress of the agricultural season particularly in the cereal production belt of Ninewah and Salahadin provinces which partly remain under the control of rebel forces. Large swathes of land in these provinces are inaccessible or destroyed by fighting resulting in lower yields. Machinery and irrigation structures in conflict areas are reported to be damaged.

Many farmers across the country resorted to planting uncertified seeds or seeds from the past harvest – resulting in lower yields – due to lack of timely seed distribution normally carried out by the Government. Supply shortages and soaring prices were also reported for fertilizers, pesticides and fuel due to supply chain disruptions.

Average cereal harvest gathered in 2016, stable import requirements

Despite the conflict-related challenges, it is estimated that some 3 million tonnes of wheat were harvested in 2016, slightly down from 2015 and about the same as the past five-year average, owing to favourable precipitation and mild winter conditions. Barley production, at 750 000 tonnes, was similar to the previous year and the five-year average. About 2 million tonnes of wheat were sold to the Iraqi Grain Board in the areas under Government control at the purchasing price of double the import price to support local production. The amount of 160 000 tonnes received by the Ministry of Agriculture as certified seeds is



Iraq
Cereal production

| | 2011-2015 average | 2015 | 2016 estimate | change 2016/2015 |
|--------------|----------------------|--------------|------------------|---------------------|
| | 000 tonnes | | | percent |
| Wheat | 3 042 | 3 200 | 3 000 | -6 |
| Barley | 792 | 800 | 750 | -6 |
| Rice (paddy) | 312 | 109 | 280 | 157 |
| Others | 278 | 259 | 259 | 0 |
| Total | 4 424 | 4 368 | 4 289 | -2 |

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets

sufficient to plan about 1 140 hectares (at a rate of 140 kg/ha), a fraction of 925 000 hectares (3.7 million donums) planted in the Government-held area last year. Precise information from outside the Government-held areas is not available.

In response to the difficult conditions in the cereal belt, wheat production has reportedly shifted to other provinces in the southeast part of the country, with the largest production increases recorded in Wasit and Diyala provinces.

Cereal import requirements in the 2016/17 marketing year (July/June) are forecast at 4.54 million tonnes, including 3 million tonnes of wheat and 1.3 million tonnes of rice.

Food prices declined in December 2016 but large regional differences persist

The cost of the food basket in December 2016 decreased by 6 percent at the national level compared to the previous month, although large regional differences persist. The purchasing power of the population living in conflict areas remains 20 percent lower than in the rest of the country. Conflict-disrupted supply lines are resulting in shortages of fresh fruits, meat, dairy and eggs.

Iraq's Ministry of Trade, through the Public Distribution System (PDS), continues to subsidize basic staple commodities (rice, wheat flour, vegetable oil, sugar and baby milk formula). In the conflict areas, the PDS is very limited due to disruptions of the supply chains and Government cut-off. Some households report receiving only partial rations. The PDS is also reported to be understocked and cash shortages prevent the Government from replacing physical commodities with cash transfers.

In the Government-held areas, latest figures from the Iraqi Central Statistical Organization indicate an annual food inflation rate of negative 4.8 percent in November 2016 compared to negative 2.8 percent in October 2016. The overall CPI in November 2016 was close to zero percent.

About 2.4 million people food insecure, particularly IDPs and returnees

As of November 2016, over 10 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance out of a total population of 36 million, about 28 percent of the population. About 3 million people are internally displaced. The rapidly changing conflict dynamics are mirrored into a volatile food security situation across the country with 2.4 million people estimated to be food insecure, of which 1.5 million are severely food insecure. Food insecurity remains higher in conflict and displacement-affected provinces. Households and internally-displaced persons (IDPs) in the affected areas, and returnees in the liberated areas, remain the most vulnerable and food insecure.

Farmers in conflict areas are resorting to negative livelihood coping strategies such as having to sell their livestock at lower prices, either for generating fast cash or because of their inability to afford fodder and vaccination for their cattle.

The World Food Programme (WFP) Emergency Operation (EMOP) to populations affected by the Iraq crisis aims to support 2.45 million individuals via food, voucher or cash transfers on a monthly basis up to June 2017. The WFP also continues to provide food assistance to vulnerable Syrian Arab Republic refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey with voucher assistance, food packages and school feeding.

