National agrifood systems and COVID-19 in Iraq

Effects, policy responses and long-term implications
The Republic of Iraq is a middle income country divided into 18 governorates run by a federal system. The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), consisting of the Governorates of Dohuk, Sulaymaniyah, and Erbil, is governed as an autonomous region by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) (EASO, 2019). The economy of Iraq is mainly state-run and is dominated by the oil sector, which accounts for 90 percent of government revenue and more than 55 percent of the GDP. The distribution of oil and gas revenues has always been disputed between the Baghdad government and the KRG (EASO, 2019).

More than 30 years of conflict in Iraq caused the displacement of millions of people, the destruction of basic services and, more generally, of livelihoods. The 2014-17 conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) nearly destroyed Iraq’s economy, including the agriculture sector. This disrupted supply chains and destroyed personal assets, food supplies, and crop and livestock production. In addition, the output lost during the conflict depleted farmers' working capital and damaged greenhouses, livestock assets, water systems, irrigation facilities and other infrastructure. This led to a massive population migration. The World Bank estimates that the conflict resulted in the loss of 2.4 trillion Iraqi dinars (USD 2.1 billion) to the agriculture sector, including 689 billion Iraqi dinars (USD 590.9 million) for damaged machinery critical to production (World Bank, 2018).

As of December 2019, just before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Iraq, the country had 1.41 million internally displaced people, 4.6 million returnees (from host, transit or internal locations, most displaced during the ISIL war, who were slowly returning to their original places) and 245,810 Syrian refugees (WFP, 2019). During the same period, protests hit the country (except in the Kurdistan Region and some northern areas), because of a lack of employment opportunities, especially for young people, as well as perceived corruption and a lack of basic services (WFP, 2019).

Government fragility and instability has prevented the achievement of greater stability, the reform of the economy and greater diversification in the non-oil sectors. Most government revenues are spent on salaries (civil servant and army salaries, pensions, etc.), which leaves little left over for strategic investments. The country urgently needs rehabilitation and recovery efforts, including large investments to rebuild infrastructure such as roads, basic service stations, irrigation, etc.

The pandemic, and government measures to limit its spread, have aggravated pre-existing vulnerabilities in several areas, including the health sector, the political and security environment, and the social and religious domains, generating additional humanitarian needs. A major fall in oil prices in 2020 had significant consequences for Iraq, since most state revenues depend on oil exports.

The Public Distribution System (PDS) – Iraq’s most important social protection scheme, which provides food baskets for all Iraqi families – was also negatively affected. As a result, the state has been in arrears in social transfers, and protests have grown. This has hampered efforts to address the pandemic (World Bank, 2020a).

On 19 December 2020, partly due to pressure on the balance of payments, the Iraqi dinar was devalued by 22 percent per USD: from 1 189 dinars to 1 450 dinars per dollar. The devaluation has had negative consequences for many industries, including agriculture, which mainly depends on imported inputs and the price of which was increased due to the devaluation.
COVID-19 cases in Iraq were on the rise again at the end of February and into March 2021, spurring the government to curtail movement between governorates and to decrease employee-working hours (WFP et al., 2021e).

On 15 March 2021, the World Health Organization reported 695,489 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 13,406 deaths in Iraq. Survival rate from COVID-19 in Iraq was 91.4 percent, a decrease of 3 percent from survival rate recorded on 25 February 2021, which was 94.4 percent (WFP et al., 2021e).

A third wave of the virus started in June 2021, reaching a peak of 13,250 thousand cases on 29 July 2021.

In September 2020, Iraq joined the COVAX Facilities, a global collaboration aiming to secure access to the COVID-19 vaccine in low and middle-income countries. Iraq approved AstraZeneca for country use and the Pfizer-BioNtech, Sinopharm and Sputnik V vaccines for emergency use. The government approved a range of deals to secure additional vaccines (IMF, 2021a).

On 22 December 2020, Iraq procured 1.5 million Pfizer vaccines against the mutated Coronavirus. The Ministry of Finance secured 3 million dollars as a first payment, estimated at 15 million dollars in total (Sky News Arabia, 2020b).
POLICY MEASURES TO CONTAIN COVID-19

What major measures have been taken to contain the spread of the virus and how are they evolving?

The Republic of Iraq (Iraq) reported its first recorded case of COVID-19 on 24 February 2020, in the city of Najaf in Najaf Governorate (OCHA, 2020), with other cases reported in the following days. However, the primary risk of transmission to Iraq came from neighbouring Iran, which dramatically escalated infections during the last week of February 2020.

The first government measure (on 27 February) was to ban travellers from certain countries, including Iran, China, Thailand, South Korea, Japan and Kuwait. Citizens were advised to avoid public gatherings, conferences and unnecessary meetings.

At the governorate levels, the measures taken were mostly related to the closure of schools and universities (OCHA, 2020a). The Semelka border crossing between KRG and northeast Syria was closed except for ‘emergency cases’ mainly related to humanitarian operations. On 6 March (OCHA, 2020c), a ‘crisis cell’ was formed in every ministry, including the Ministry of Agriculture, which immediately ordered the closing of public spaces, an action replicated in the KRG. In addition, health screening points were established at border points between KRG and Federal Iraq (OCHA, 2020c).

After the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 to be a global pandemic on 11 March 2020, and considering the growing cases, the federal and regional governments attempted to contain its spread by imposing more severe measures to slow the spread of the disease.

Curfews, lockdowns and movement restrictions

On 17 March 2020, the Republic of Iraq’s Crisis Cell and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) imposed a month-long lockdown, curfew and movement restrictions to limit the spread of COVID-19. The population was also advised to take health protection measures, such as wearing masks outside the home and not leaving the house unless absolutely necessary (OCHA, 2020c; OCHA, 2020d). The following actions were announced:

- the imposition of total lockdown in Iraq, except for lifesaving and humanitarian activities and food markets.
- twenty-four hour a day curfews and movement restrictions in both Federal Iraq and the KRG;
- disinfection campaigns in specific areas;
- restriction of movement in and out of IDP and refugee camps in most governorates;
- flight suspensions;
- travel bans between Iraqi provinces.

The restrictive measures, rigorously implemented by the Republic of Iraq and KRG, were further extended until 24 April due to an increased in confirmed cases.

During the same period, humanitarian clusters developed guidance for COVID-19 preparedness and response planning led by the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster for dissemination among camps and returnee sites (OCHA, 2020e).

As of mid-April 2020, the containment measures implemented in Iraq appeared to be effective, with a decrease of 63 percent in the week-to-week cumulative number of cases (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020b). In late April 2020, nevertheless, movement restrictions and curfews
remained in place to curtail further transmission of the disease. However, both the Republic of Iraq and KRG partially lifted the stringent curfews and movement restrictions that had been in place for several weeks (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020c). Furthermore, during Ramadan and the celebration of Eid Al-Fitr, both the Republic of Iraq and the KRG relaxed the stringent movement restrictions. However, airports throughout Iraq remained closed to commercial travel until 23 July.

The restrictive measures, which were rigorously implemented, kept case numbers significantly lower than in neighbouring countries. However, loosening movement restrictions resulted in a surge in the number of confirmed cases (which were also revealed by increased testing).

By September 2020, safety concerns related to COVID-19 and movement restrictions were only present in some districts. By contrast, other districts were fully accessible, and safety risks were considered low.

The Council of Ministers issued several measures to prevent the spread of the new strain of COVID-19, which included preventing movement between governorates except for humanitarian-related travel, as well as reducing government employee worktime by 50 percent (WFP et al., 2021e).

Schools and other gatherings
From the start of the pandemic, containment measures included closing schools and universities and restricting gatherings of individuals. During the first week of March 2020, Friday prayers, which bring many worshipers together, were cancelled (OCHA, 2020b). In March, the Republic of Iraq’s Crisis Cell decided to prevent religious visits during the month of Rajab⁴ and to ban religious ceremonies, including funerals and weddings, as well as social events.

These measures were slowly reversed. On 19 September 2020, the Republic of Iraq’s Crisis Cell amended its restrictions on gatherings of individuals, which enabled the re-opening of mosques and places of worship while keeping health prevention measures in place.

The new school year brought new rules. Students were allowed to attend school in person one day per week (whether universities, schools or kindergartens) (Sky News Arabia, 2020a, emphasizing the government’s commitment to safety and social distancing.

Border closings and restrictions on internal movements
The government banned flights from high-risk countries such as Iran, China, Thailand, South Korea, Japan, Italy, Singapore, Bahrain and Kuwait.⁵ Returning citizens, diplomats and official delegations were exempted from the order.

During the third week of February 2020, the government added Turkey, France, Spain, and Nigeria to the list of banned countries (OCHA, 2020c). In the last week of February 2020, Iraq closed its border with Iran and banned travel to and from another eight countries⁶ (OCHA, 2020a).

The government banned cargo flights from Kuwait and Iran, although such flights were generally allowed. On 29 February 2020, Turkey announced the temporary suspension of its flights to Iraq.

On 28 March 2020, the following airports were closed to all passenger flights due to COVID-19: Al Najaf (ORNI), Baghdad (ORBI), Basrah (ORMM), Erbil (ORER), Sulaymaniyah (ORSU). These

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¹ The visit of Rajab 27 is a religious visit to the Shia community in Iraq, which coincides with the death of Imam Musa al-Kadhim, one of the Shi'a imams.

² The eight countries were: Iran, China, Thailand, South Korea, Japan, Italy and Singapore, Bahrain and Kuwait (Iraqi nationals, diplomats and official delegations are exempted)
restrictions did not apply to Red Cross, Medevac, emergency, military or cargo flights. In addition, Iraqi Airways flights to Beijing and Guangzhou were suspended (Logistics Cluster and WFP, 2020).

Iraqi authorities banned travellers from Bahrain, China, France, Iran, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Nigeria, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Turkey, and Thailand. The entry ban applied to travellers coming directly or indirectly from those countries, but exempted Iraqi nationals, diplomats and official delegations. However, Iraqi citizens and residents visiting those locations in the 14 days prior to arrival were asked to self-quarantine for two weeks (Logistics Cluster and WFP, 2020).

Regarding entry restrictions, countries were placed into two groups, according to whether the rate of COVID-19 confirmed cases was above or below 500 per million people. Upon arrival at border crossings, suspected cases were transferred to hospitals to receive a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test. Afterwards, they had to quarantine in hotels or at home with a legal commitment to adhere to the quarantine until the test results were issued.

The suspension of flights was extended until 22 July 2020 except in cases of emergency or with special approval (INA, 2020). The suspension was lifted gradually, according to the changes in the epidemiological situation in the country.

**What major measures have been taken to relax or strengthen the lockdown and to contain the spread of the disease, especially in relation to the functions of agrifood system?**

Iraq exempted certain entities from the rigorous restrictive measures to facilitate the functioning of food supply chains. Thus, in April 2020, the food production and supply – imports included – were assessed as stable and adequate for the population (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020a).

Transport services between governorates were permitted for agricultural harvesters, agricultural equipment, crops, and agricultural products, including live animals and veterinary supplies. As early as April 2020, trucks transporting agricultural products to wholesale markets were exempted from curfew. The relaxation of import restrictions on agricultural inputs and the easing of movement controls allowed registered farmers to continue operating, but unregistered farmers did not benefit from government exemptions. Later, workers in the agricultural sector and water resources were also excluded, in which earlier on they were included.

At the beginning of May 2020, the Iraqi Parliament announced an emergency agriculture plan to address Iraq's challenges (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020d), prioritizing agricultural production in order to reduce the country's dependence on food imports which especially in light of reduced oil revenues.

Farmers and livestock owners were allowed to travel to their farms during the curfew without registering and to liaise with official authorities and local councils (as stipulated in Decision 55) (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020a). Marine fishing was halted due to the curfew, while freshwater fish production continued.

During the first week of March, the government announced the closure of public areas, including markets restaurants and leisure places, until further notice (OCHA, 2020c). However, food, fruit and vegetable stores, bakeries and pharmacies have continued operations, allowing no more than five people inside at once and requiring face masks for both workers and customers. Restaurants providing home delivery services were also allowed to operate.

The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) Directorates granted free movement to their various departments (i.e., the Plant Protection Directorate, Veterinary Services Directorate and Plant Production Departments) and the private sector, including the Mesopotamian Company and
General Company for Agricultural Supplies, to enable them to provide support, services and supplies to farmers.

The MoA facilitated the movement of harvesting machinery and crews between governorates establishing storage facilities for barley. On 2 April, barley harvesting began in central and southern Iraq. The MoA continued to purchase barley from farmers, which they processed and sold to livestock owners at subsidised rates (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020a).

In April, the Thi Qar Department of Agriculture announced the lifting of the two-month (pelagic) fishing ban. It should be noted that the ban was imposed due to the fish breeding season, not COVID-19 mitigation measures.

Agricultural processing, slaughterhouses and freshwater fisheries continued to operate normally, sending sufficient products to market to meet consumer demand (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020a).

In December 2020, the MoA lifted another ban on inter-governorate movement and trade of maize crops to facilitate the supply of feed to poultry producers in the south.

**Import ban and export support**

Pre-COVID-19 policies banning the import of certain items continued during the outbreak. The MoA continued to prohibit imports of 25 agricultural products to promote local production (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020a). Compliance with the import ban is enforced by the Organized Crime Department, with field inspection teams monitoring local food prices (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020b). In May 2020, the ban was extended to other products, including buckthorn, potatoes, lettuce, garlic, trees, peppers, dates, table eggs, live chicken, tomatoes, rye, beetroot, honey, frozen marine fish, chilled and frozen river fish, date molasses, watermelon and green peas.

On 8 September 2020, land border crossings were opened to commercial movement of non-food products seven days a week – with strict adherence to preventive health measures – to secure the needs of the local markets (Iraq, 2020a).

In November 2020, the Ministry of Trade of Iraq\(^4\) announced that the State Company for Fairs and Commercial Services of Iraq had granted 7 204 miscellaneous import (food and non-food) licenses, including 794 agriculture-related import licenses (WFP et al., 2020i).

\(^{4}\) "The Ministry of Trade of Iraq is a conglomeration of state-owned enterprises and operates a nearly $6bn annual budget that provides a monthly public food distribution programme for Iraqis. It also manages the import of grain, seeds and construction materials", from socialprotection.org [last access December, 13 2021]
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AGRIFOOD POLICY MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS

What major measures are in place or expected that target the food system directly?

By the end of April 2020, the importance of protecting Iraq's production and increasing self-sufficiency for both crop and animal products had become clear. Consequently, the Ministry of Planning (MoP) announced several measures to sustain the food system and secure the availability of fresh products. They include:

Support to agriculture and food production

- In late April, the MoP announced a national food security project in Iraq (2020-2022) in partnership with relevant stakeholders (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020c).
- The General Company for Grain Trade received 64,181 tonnes of wheat, 96 percent of which was denoted ‘first-class (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020d).’ In addition, the Ministry of Trade (MoT) took steps to improve the marketing process by reducing delays and preventing overcrowding at collection centres (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020d).
- Also in April, the government announced their intention to buy cereals from farmers at the same prices as in previous years – ranging from ID 420,000 to 520,000 per tonne, depending on the quality. This helped the markets and food prices to retain their stability (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020b). At the same time, the government owned Rafidain Bank announced that cash payments to farmers would follow standard procedures. These announcements sought to ease farmers' fears about the government’s ability to purchase their crops given to dropping oil prices.
- In June 2020, in coordination with the MoA, the state Oil Products Distribution Company provided 25 million litres of subsidised diesel to wheat and barley farmers in the Nineveh Governorate. This diesel was sold at official government prices (WFP et al., 2020b).
- In July 2020, the KRG Minister of Agriculture and Water Resources (MoAWR) announced that state-run tomato and other canning plants would reopen to accept locally-produced goods for distribution to vulnerable households (WFP et al., 2020b). The KRG also issued a license to establish a sugar processing plant in the region, contracting 8,000 farmers to grow sugar beet (WFP et al., 2020b).

At the end of November 2020, the MoA postponed payments of dues on farmer loans owed to the Ministry until 2021. In addition, the MoA cancelled the debts of the State Company for Agricultural Supplies for the agricultural season (2020-2021) and pledged to provide them with subsidized seeds and fertilizers for the winter planting season. It provided permits to the private sector to import diammonium phosphate (DAP) and urea fertilizers through the State Company for Agricultural Supplies.

In October 2020, the government unveiled a white paper for economic reform, which outlined the government’s broad priorities. Through the MoA, the paper proposed major economic reforms in the agrifood sector, with the aim of increasing agricultural production and participation in the sector and growing the agricultural economy through increased private sector participation and agrifood exports (Iraq, 2020b). The MoA gradually transferred delayed payments to farmers from formerly ISIS-controlled governorates through the Mesopotamia General Seeds Company after completing background security checks for non-ISIS affiliation. This was in line with the postponement of outstanding financial dues on farmer loans until 2021.
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Technical services

- Veterinary services were maintained nationwide, particularly after the bird flu outbreak (H5N1) in the Ninewah Governorate around June 2020 (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020f). However, the free vaccination campaign against other livestock diseases was limited to the provinces where they were reported (WFP, FAO and World Bank, 2020h).
- In July 2020, the Plant Protection Directorate (PPD) prioritized control campaigns against seasonal date palms pests, such as Rot Disease Palm Pollens and Blight Rachis (Leaf Blight) (WFP et al., 2020c).
- In August 2020, the Plant Protection Directorate began a new control operation against the Corn Stalk Borer, a maize pest.
- The government silos accepted roughly 5.1 million tonnes of wheat, approximately 0.5 million tonnes more than last year.
- During the same period, the MoT began a campaign to cover and fumigate wheat in the government silos before the start of the rainy season to minimize postharvest losses, ready for the PDS (WFP et al., 2020e).

Policy change and budget support

- In November 2020, the MoA received approval from the Council of Ministers to distribute two trillion Iraqi dinars (USD 1.37 billion) to farmers to cover their agricultural input requirements for the 2020-21 season. In addition, the MoA also planned to supply farmers with agricultural services such as mechanization and necessary extension services.
- In late December 2020, the government introduced the 2021 budget to, inter alia, mitigate the effect of COVID-19 in the food system. The 2021 budget includes:
  - USD 198.7 million for the MoA (an increase of 39 percent over 2019), with an additional USD 87 million for various subsidy programmes;
  - USD 2.89 billion for the MoT, of which USD 2.3 billion (KRG share: USD 291.5 million) was assigned to the wheat and barley purchase programme – an increase of 80 percent since 2019 – and an additional USD 548 million (KRG share: USD 69.4 million) was allocated to the PDS – which had been reduced by around 61 percent since 2019. This was a signal of a significant change in government policy towards subsidy reform and the reallocation of subsidy resources from the downstream of the agrifood chain to the upstream, benefiting farmers while aiming to better target assistance to the poorest Iraqis (WFP et al., 2021a; WFP et al., 2021b).
  - In January 2021, the Council of Ministers approved an amendment to the Law 24 of 2013, which regulates full-time engagement in farming activities. The amendment grants citizens engaged in full-time farming the right to own agricultural land under cultivation at no cost; the opportunity to participate in government contracting through direct selection without participation in public auctions; inclusion in the retirement law, and the ability to transfer ownership of agricultural land to their heirs. (The MoA had already embarked on land reforms that include greater ownership of agricultural land prior to the pandemic).

The actions to support the agricultural sector are not new per se: Iraq already directs a number of subsidies to the sector for the purpose of national food security. However, major changes have been put in place to increase agricultural production and private sector participation (by local communities, farming in peri-urban areas, farming by returnees, etc.) (WFP et al., 2021b).
Due to the global economic crisis (and reduced oil prices), the government has struggled to pay farmers who sold their production (wheat, barley, corn) to government silos and state companies during 2020. One result was delayed payments to farmers selling subsidized wheat and barley from the 2019-2020 cropping season. This topic became a priority in the parliamentary debate on the fiscal budget of 2021 (WFP et al., 2021c).

**Price controls**

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the Republic of Iraq introduced measures to support the agricultural sector and to keep local domestic food prices stable and protect them from speculative attacks and other market malpractices. This has continued during the crisis, with security forces monitoring and controlling markets (PMO, 2020) and holding violators accountable under the law (Iraq, 2020c).

**Seeds**

- In October 2020, for the first time since 2003, the Mesopotamia General Seed Company has distributed high-quality barley seeds to farmers for the 2020/2021 cereal planting season (WFP et al., 2020f). The seeds represented higher seed classes of barley varieties with greater productivity and more resilience to the climate (WFP et al., 2020f).
- To improve agricultural productivity and food quality, with the aim of reaching national self-sufficiency, the MoA supplied registered farmers with 35 kilograms of base grade seeds, 40 kilograms of registered seeds, and 45 kilograms of certified seeds (WFP et al., 2020g). The MoA also distributed subsidized barley feed to sheep and goat breeders, buffalo and cow breeders, including camel owners, and poultry and fish farms (WFP et al., 2020g).

**Financial institutions**

- The Central Bank of Iraq (CBI) reduced its reserve requirement from 15 percent to 13 percent.
- As part of the economic stimulus programme, the CBI granted a moratorium on interest and principal payments by small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through the ‘one trillion ID’ initiative. In addition, it encouraged banks to extend the maturity of all loans they deemed appropriate (IMF, 2021a).
- In the first three months of 2021, the CBI offered 5 million Iraqi dinars (USD 4 200) of additional support to existing projects under the one trillion ID initiative and reduced the interest rates on loans extended through the scheme (IMF, 2021a).
- During the same period, the CBI encouraged the use of electronic payments to contain the transmission of the virus. In addition, it instructed vendors to eliminate commissions on such payments for the next six months (IMF, 2021a).
- In December 2020, the CBI announced a 22.7 percent devaluation of the Iraqi dinar/USD exchange rate to narrow the external deficit and reduce pressures on foreign exchange reserves (IMF, 2021a).

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5 As in other cases, not all programmes were undertaken as a response to COVID-19
What additional policy measures are in place or anticipated that will mitigate the effect of the crisis on vulnerable groups and their livelihoods?

The vast reduction in state oil revenues during the first half of 2020 has compromised the Republic of Iraq’s ability to fund its large wage bill (representing over 90 percent of its budget) as well as to fully fund social protection measures, including the PDS programme.

With an already high share of the vulnerable populations, the centre and north regions and the KRG registered increased poverty (WFP et al., 2020h).

 Authorities have implemented different measures to address the impact of COVID-19 on the economy. Among others:

- The Ministry of Finance (MoF) provided immediate cash assistance to the Ministry of Health (MoH) to provide needed support to particularly affected people.
- Additional funding support was provided to MoH from a fund established by the CBI and financial institutions.

The Republic of Iraq and KRG intended to protect vulnerable groups by providing a comprehensive social care system, including education and health care services, and ensuring that scarce resources are directed to these groups during the upcoming difficult transitional period through the pandemic (Nas News, 2020).

Below are some actions taken to support the population, specifically the most vulnerable people.

Social protection measures

**Public Distribution System (PDS) for food rations**

The PDS fell behind in distributing commodities to the governorates due to delays in the approval of the government budget and substantially decreased government revenues. Nevertheless, the government was able to do the following:

- In preparation for the fourth PDS cycle, mills were supplied with 1 235 860 metric tonnes (MT) of wheat to produce 40 million bags of flour. The General Company for Grain Trade delivered strict health and safety guidelines to all headquarters, production sites and operating mills in strict compliance with the recommendations of the Crisis Cell and the Command Committee. As a result, the fourth PDS distributed six million bags of local wheat flour nationwide. Furthermore, teams conducted random field visits to monitor the mills and lab tests and ensure that only high-quality flour was distributed (WFP et al., 2020a).
- In early June (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020g), the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) allocated about USD 328 million to this year’s third round of regular social protection assistance, which aimed to reach 1.3 million pre-registered households.
- The Ministry of Trade (MoT) continues to distribute (albeit on a delayed basis) food rations while paying back arrears owed to wheat farmers for their production from 2014/5 in addition to their 2020 harvest (WFP et al., 2020f) as reported in October 2020.
- The MoT issued flour ration cards for eligible citizens as a COVID-19 measure and equipped the mills with the rations of wheat allocated for 2021 (Media Office of the Ministry of Commerce, 2021).6
- The MoT provided rice for the PDS and contracted with national suppliers to supply 40 000 tonnes of sugar, 36 000 tonnes of cooking oil and an additional 198 850 tonnes of

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local rice for ration cards following few months of suspension due to financial limitations. In November, the MoT started supplying PDS agents with locally-produced vegetable oil in the nine Governorates of Baghdad, Mosul, Basra, Maysan, Diwaniyah, Diyala, Muthanna, Wasit and Anbar. The ninth distribution cycle of wheat grains started in Salah al-Din, Muthanna, Diyala, Babil, Ninewa, Thi-Qar, Maysan, Wasit and Najaf Governorates on 16 November.

- The MoT kicked off its first round of distributions for 2021 on 9 February, despite many challenges. The distribution included rice, sugar and vegetable oil. Iraq had issued an international tender to buy 30 000 tons of rice, scheduled to close in early February. The country needs to import around 1.25 million tons of rice annually for the PDS.

- The MoT had approximately 190 000 tonnes of rice available in their warehouses but struggled to find the funds to finance imports at the beginning of the year (2021). In addition, the MoT issued a tender to buy around 80 000 tonnes of sugar from local suppliers for distribution through the PDS (2 February). As a result of the tender, MoT only received 47 billion dinars, only 9 percent of the budget allocated to PDS by the fiscal budget of 2021 (Nina News, 2021; WFP et al., 2021e).

- The MoT teamed up with the World Food Programme (WFP) to digitise the PDS starting from 2019. In January 2021, an application was launched enabling people to update their information – for example in the case of a new-born or a marriage – directly onto their phones instead of having to visit the PDS offices in person; the smartphone app reached 1.6 million people in Iraq (Iraq and WFP, 2021). The PDS digitalization provides the foundation for other government ministries to create a single, social register of the families most in need of support.

Minha and other cash transfers

The Supreme Committee for Health and National Safety introduced a cash transfer scheme called Minha, targeting the families of private sector workers that do not receive salaries or benefits from the government. Approximately 2.7 million people have registered for this programme. The scheme provided 30 000 dinars to individuals impacted by COVID-19 due to sickness, lack of employment, etc (WFP, FAO and World Bank, 2020b). Each eligible individual received 30,000 dinars (USD 25), with the scheme costing around 300 billion Iraqi dinars (USD 254 million) in total. The Ministry of Planning’s Minha team introduced a simplified mechanism for transferring cash to selected households, using cash-out points throughout the governorates that have been approved by the Central Bank. Targeted households received an SMS informing them of their grant amount and the nearest cash-out point. Cash distributions started on 8 May 2020 and were staggered to avoid large gatherings around the pay-out points; electronic verification was later introduced (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020e).

Other in-kind distribution

At the beginning of July 2020, the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD) announced the distribution of food and hygiene baskets to 10 072 internally displaced families in the Anbar, Diyala, Baghdad and Salah Al-Din Governorates. In addition, the MoMD launched an initiative called ‘1.5 Million for Returnees,’ which provided 2 600 returning families with 1.5 million dinars each (around USD 1 000) to cover their basic needs (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020c) and distributed double rations to internally displaced people (IDPs) in camps, amounting to 44.5 kilograms per family (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020a). The size and composition of the food basket is tailored to local preferences, demographic profile, activity levels, climatic conditions, local coping...
capacity and existing levels of malnutrition and disease. It is composed of a staple, such as wheat flour or rice, lentils, chickpeas or other pulses, vegetable oil (fortified with vitamin A and D), sugar, and iodized salt.

**Subsidies and tax relief**

The government suspended tax payments in the governorates to counteract some of the economic repercussions of the pandemic. The collection of rental fees by state departments was also stopped. The Council of Ministers was requested to exempt companies, farmers and contract farmers from rental payments for the year 2020. Loan deductions were stopped.

The payment of loans for the purchase of machinery, equipment, and agricultural supplies from the General Company for Agricultural Supplies – due in 2020 – were postponed. In addition, loan payments and sums owed to the Agricultural Bank (Ministry of Finance) were also deferred.

**Support from NGOs**

On 22 March 2020, the Republic of Iraq launched a national campaign to encourage non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and charities to respond to COVID-19. The NGO Directorate under the Minister’s Council General Secretariat created an online platform where activities could be reported (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020e), identifying a total of 666 NGOs that were actively responding to the COVID-19 crisis. Nationwide, the government estimates that a total of 1,268,081 beneficiaries had received food assistance from the NGOs since the start of the campaign.

**How are the governments funding the measures described above?**

The epidemic has had a significant negative impact on the financial revenues of Iraq, mainly due to the reduced demand for oil and lower oil prices.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) estimated that oil-producing countries, including Iraq, saw a drop in income of between 50 and 85 percent in 2020 compared with 2019, the lowest income from the sector in over two decades (IEA, 2020).

To safeguard the budgetary allocation to the Ministry of Health, the following measures were taken: On 2 July 2020, the Cabinet approved USD 34 million in funding for the Ministry of Health to support efforts to fight the COVID-19 pandemic (Newsbah, 2020). At the same time the Central Bank of Iraq established a fund to collect donations from financial institutions, raising USD 37 million, with initial contributions of USD 20 million from the Central Bank and USD 5 million from the Trade Bank of Iraq. Furthermore, several other transfers were made to the MoH amounting to USD 210 million, and the procedures for acquiring medical supplies were simplified, including vaccines.

The additional expenditures related to the pandemic has had both direct and indirect implications for the agrifood sector, on the one hand through reduced availability of funding (due to the diversion of funds towards health) but also due to the reduction of capacity.

**What main initiatives have the humanitarian and development communities taken to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on food security, nutrition, agriculture, and water and sanitation?**

The humanitarian and development communities reoriented their response plan to address the emergency needs and priorities resulting from COVID-19. However, there has been a significant
deterioration in access by humanitarian actors to needy individuals and communities since the outbreak of the pandemic due to containment measures. Nevertheless, activities and operations varied by governorate, reflecting the ability of the governorate-level authorities to engage with humanitarian organizations to grant *ad hoc* governorate-level exemptions for movement (OCHA, 2020f).

International, national, and local humanitarian organizations, including United Nations organizations, have contributed directly and indirectly to mitigating the effects of COVID-19 on Iraq, mainly through cash grants for the most vulnerable groups (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020a).

The World Health Organization (WHO) leads the health response in Iraq, engaging with the MoH and the federal government for COVID-19 coordination mechanisms.

On 23 February, a United Nations inter-agency Humanitarian Operations Cell (HOC) was established. Chaired by the Resident Humanitarian Coordinator, the cell included:

- The WHO;
- the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA);
- the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR);
- the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI);
- the Development Coordination Office;
- the WFP;
- the International Organization for Migration (IOM);
- the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF);
- NGO representatives.

The humanitarian community started identifying critical interventions in early March 2020, mapping the humanitarian activities related to COVID-19 preparedness and response. Humanitarian activities mainly focused on the following areas:

- immediate health-related responses, including measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic (hygiene promotion, water and sanitation, disease outbreak preparedness and response, quarantine and isolation measures, communication with communities/awareness-raising, etc.);
- interventions adjusted to new and changing scenarios, such as remote protection monitoring, and alternative care for unaccompanied children;
- food assistance, cash and livelihoods support for the most vulnerable people in the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) target population, including the expansion of cash-based food assistance, cash for work and multipurpose cash.

In line with the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus approach, the humanitarian and development community sharpened its focus on the links between food security and conflict. Given Iraq’s already fragile context, the added pressure of COVID-19 on scarce resources and livelihoods has the potential to impact community relations and create increased competition over food. As a result, agencies such as WFP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) started taking conflict-sensitive programming into account in providing assistance and prioritizing activities (WFP *et al*., 2020h).

Food Security Cluster (FSC) partners provided agricultural inputs to 558 returnee households in the Mosul, Hamdanya and Tilkaeaf districts in Nineva in October 2020. Additionally, cluster partners assisted 2 089 host community members by providing emergency cash for work in Basrah and Baghdad Governorates. WFP targeted approximately 260 000 IDPs (including a
COVID-19 caseload of 7,500 people) and over 69,000 refugees (including a new caseload of around 34,000). WFP has continued to utilize different cash delivery instruments, including mobile money transfers (MMT), money transfer agents (MTA), electronic vouchers (EV), and cashless transactions in addition to in-kind transfers (WFP et al., 2020g). In November 2020, the FSC partners provided emergency cash-for-work assistance to 1,930 host community families in Wasit and Thi Qar Governorates in Ninevah and Erbil. They also provided in-kind assistance, agricultural, animal health, and animal feed to 440 returnees and host community families to help mitigate the temporary lack of market access and assist vulnerable populations (WFP et al., 2020i).

In early 2021, the FSC partners reached 31,242 individuals (returnees, out of camp IDPs and hosts) through the support of the agriculture sector, the support of health facilities, and the delivery of emergency food baskets in Ninewa, Salah Al-Din, Anbar, Erbil, Duhok, Baghdad, Basrah and Erbil. The partners also distributed 25,000 food baskets to IDPs in Zakho, Sinjar and Sulaymaniyah (WFP et al., 2021a).

On 18 July 2020, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) allocated more than USD 10 million to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to expand its pandemic response to three additional governorates. In total, USAID has provided nearly USD 60 million to combat the COVID-19 pandemic (USAID, 2021).

Table 1 below summarizes the most critical initiatives taken by UN agencies and major stakeholders to tackle food insecurity in Iraq.7

### TABLE 1 | Projects related to food security and nutrition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donor</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Allocated amount (in USD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
<td>Enhancing the resilience of vulnerable families through agricultural support in Basra Governorate</td>
<td>1,207,799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
<td>The Impact of COVID-19 on the food security and food supply chain in Iraq</td>
<td>81,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq Humanitarian Fund/World Vision International</td>
<td>Improved livelihoods for vulnerable IDPs, returnees and host communities in Ninawa</td>
<td>1,041,799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of the United States of America/World Food Programme</td>
<td>Iraq/COVID-19 (Syria Response): Emergency food assistance (USAID/WFP)</td>
<td>4,630,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT Alliance Lutheran World Relief/Al-Aghsan Foundation for Agriculture and Environmental Development</td>
<td>Enhancing livelihoods and food security in Ninawa Governorate</td>
<td>141,598</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 See Annex for more detailed information on WASH-related programmes, including funding
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donor</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Allocated amount (in USD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations/Agency for</td>
<td>Identification of beneficiaries and management of cash for work in Nineveh Governorate. Conditional cash transfer programming</td>
<td>12 666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Cooperation and Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of the United States of America/World Food Programme</td>
<td>Food security (USAID/WFP)</td>
<td>10 582 848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of Germany</td>
<td>World Food Programme (Emergency food assistance over cash assistance in Iraq (2020 portion))</td>
<td>3 800 217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of Germany</td>
<td>OXFAM (contribute to recovery and strengthening resilience of conflict affected persons in Salah al-din – German funds channelled through WFP and OXFAM.</td>
<td>2 210 275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZOA</td>
<td>Assist 12 000 conflict-affected North East Syria (NES) Refugees living in camps and with host communities in KRG with Non-food Items (NFIs) and Multi-Purpose Cash Grant (MPCGs) by December 2019</td>
<td>360.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of Canada/World Food Programme</td>
<td>Contribution to WFP - Food security. Total award: CAD 4 000 000</td>
<td>1 519 757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of the United States of America/World Food Programme</td>
<td>Food security (USAID/WFP)</td>
<td>7 464 656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
<td>Impact of COVID-19 on the food security and food supply chain</td>
<td>81 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq Humanitarian Fund/World Vision International</td>
<td>Improved livelihoods for vulnerable IDPs, returnees and host communities in Ninawa</td>
<td>1 041 799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of France/Action Contre la Faim</td>
<td>Assistance alimentaire et resilience</td>
<td>284 091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of the United States of America/World Food Programme</td>
<td>Iraq/COVID-19 (Syria Response) – Emergency</td>
<td>4 630 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of Germany/Deutsche Welthungerhilfe e.v</td>
<td>German Agro Action: humanitarian food security and WASH aid to vulnerable communities affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.</td>
<td>668 052</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is the funding situation for the humanitarian and development community?\(^8\)

In 2020, the split under the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) between funding for COVID-19 and for other activities was as follows\(^9\):

FIGURE 1 | Summary of funding levels for COVID-19 and other activities under the Iraq 2020 HRP

![Image of Iraq 2020 HRP summary]

Overall, the funding situation for the Iraq HRP in 2020 was as follows (OCHA, 2021a):

FIGURE 2 | Summary of funding levels for the Iraq 2020 HRP

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\(^8\) Development Initiative (with which the FAO Global Network- Technical Support Unit has a contractual agreement) is developing a platform to track humanitarian and development funding for COVID-19. It combines Financial Tracking Service (FTS) and International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) data. This platform is expected to go live in June 2020. We are exploring whether data is disaggregated by sectors and considers food security, nutrition, and agriculture specifically.

\(^9\) Financial Tracking Service, OCHA; more information available here.
On 7 May 2020, an update to the Global Humanitarian Response for COVID-19 was launched (UN, 2020). The global financial requirements for the new response rose from USD 2 billion to USD 6.69 billion. The significant increase was the consequence of the rapid evolution of humanitarian needs, the inclusion of additional countries in the appeal, the increased cost of essential health and other supplies and of air and sea transportation. The appeal sought USD 263.3 million to tend to immediate health needs in Iraq. This included an increased national capacity to respond to public health challenges, such as improving health workers' ability to conduct surveillance and rapid response; the sourcing of personal protective equipment, sterilization agents and testing reagents; and the construction of isolation units in referral hospitals. The required activities were identified and prioritized in close collaboration with national and local authorities.

In 2021, OCHA's Financial Tracking System (FTS) reported that USD 7 921 637 had been either paid or committed in response to the COVID-19 appeal in the Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan (OCHA, 2021b). Nevertheless, as of late May 2021, the Iraq HRP remains underfunded, with only 21.9 percent of the funding requirements covered (OCHA, 2021c).
IMMEDIATE EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS ON THE MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE

According to the World Bank, GDP (at factor cost) contracted by 10.4 percent in 2020. Growth was curtailed by depressed global oil demand and adherence to the OPEC+ production cuts agreement, which led to a 17.6 percent contraction in oil GDP. The non-oil economy experienced a 9 percent contraction as national and global COVID-19 restrictions reduced demand, with the religious tourism and services sectors suffering the most. Weak domestic demand and cheaper imported goods kept inflation pressures low, with headline and core inflation only increasing to 0.6 and 1.0 percent respectively in 2020 (World Bank, 2020b; World Bank, 2021). The poverty rate was expected to rise significantly due to the pandemic (by 7 to 14 percentage points).

The economic situation and the lack of income and liquidity are having a significant impact on access to food and food security, even in the face of abundant supplies. Declining income from oil and the inability of the government to pay pensions and salaries as a result are major drivers of acute food insecurity.

The pandemic has caused the stagnation of the national economy, as evidenced by increased unemployment rates and poverty. The labour market faced a loss of employment of 27 percent from February to June 2020. A steep reduction in the employment rate was registered in the first months of the outbreak; the reopening and relaxation of the restrictive measures helped to reactivate some businesses, but employment remained below pre-pandemic levels at the end of 2020.

Food security and nutrition: latest data and projections

According to the 2021 Report on the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI), undernourishment in Iraq increased from 23.8 percent in 2004–2006 to 37.5 percent in 2018–2020. The latest Global Report on Food Crises (FSIN and Global Network, 2021) reported that 0.7 million refugees in Iraq faced acute food insecurity during January–December 2020 (FSIN and Global Network, 2021). During the same period, wasting for children under five years stood at 3.0 percent, while stunting among the same age group fell from 19.2 to 11.6 between 2012 and 2020.

According to FAO’s FIES indicator (also an SDG indicator 2.1.2), Iraq’s prevalence of severe food insecurity in 2020, measured during a 12-month recall period, was 12.3 percent. Compared with the last information reported by FAO, severe food insecurity seems to be decreasing. However, the combined prevalence of moderate and severe food insecurity, at 48.6 percent, is more than 5 percentage points higher than the 2019 assessment (Boero et al., 2021).

The data also show that rates of moderate or severe food insecurity are highest in Muthannā, Maysān and Ninawā provinces and lowest in Baghdād, Babil and Karbalā. However according to WFP et al. report (WFP et al., 2020h) the highest prevalence of severe food insecurity is concentrated in Muthannā, An Najaf and Maysān, while the lowest prevalence is found in Thī-Qar, Šalāh Ad Din and Karbalā. It should be noted that the level of precision of these estimates is low given the large margins of error.

According to the Boero et al. report (2021) when comparing the prevalence of food insecurity based on experiences and conditions reported as having occurred at least once over the last 12

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10 The most recent assessment conducted by FAO using the FIES methodology was in 2019. The data were collected by the Gallup World Poll. This assessment has not been published. The comparison is reported in Boero et al. (2021)
months with those limited to the last 4 weeks preceding the survey, the result points to high ratios of recent to annual prevalence, with little variation across the departments. Specifically, rates of recent food insecurity are three-fourths of the annual ones for the case of moderate food insecurity and two thirds of the annual ones for severe food insecurity rates. The results on overall food insecurity prevalence, and the high share of recent to annual rates point to a serious and persistent food insecurity problem, especially in one considers that the 4-week period prior to the survey was not necessarily expected to be the period of highest food insecurity during the year (Boero et al., 2021).

Iraq is one of eight countries facing major food crises in the Eurasia region. In early 2021, dryness prevailed in Iraq, underpinned by the La Niña meteorological phenomenon (FAO-GIEWS, March 2021).

Protracted conflict and the repercussions of the previous conflict continued to drive food insecurity in the country. In addition, there are around 1.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 4.7 million returnees who risk repeated and protracted displacement (ACAPS, January 2021).

April 2020 mVAM data (the COVID-19 phone-based household survey) revealed that most surveyed households (93 percent) have acceptable food consumption scores, while 7 percent had borderline (5 percent) or poor (2 percent) scores. More than half of the households with borderline food consumption were using coping mechanisms to improve their consumption. Forty-two percent of households employed food-based coping strategies such as reducing adult consumption so children could eat more (33 percent), limiting the number of meals per day (21 percent), decreasing portion sizes (20 percent) and relying on less expensive food (17 percent) (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020d).

According to WFP, approximately 5.7 percent of the population (2.2 million people) reported insufficient food consumption during the second week of June (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020g). As the Ramadan and Eid festivities concluded, food insufficiency started to increase, according to mVAM data (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020g). During Ramadan, consumption patterns generally improved as religious charities, relying on zakat donations, contributed food to needy people; however, the number returned to the previous level after the holidays.

From 2 to 15 November, the households employing food-based coping strategies increased from 8.9 percent to 9.8 percent. The common copying strategy was reliance on less expensive food (30.7 percent of households).

The mVAM data collected on 31 December 2020 estimated that around 8 percent of households, representing 3 million people, did not consume sufficient food. This was an increase of approximately 0.6 million people from the third week of December, which resulted from the devaluation of the Iraqi dinar. Households reporting reported challenges accessing markets increased by around 1 percentage point during the same period, from 12 percent to 13 percent. Only a few households (0.8 percent or roughly 0.3 million people) reported that concerns about COVID-19 were the major factor limiting their access to markets. Around 11 percent cited reasons such as the lack of income prompted by the pandemic.

In early February 2021, mVAM data showed that approximately 2.6 million people in Iraq were consuming insufficient food, with greatest number of people affected in Babylon (WFP et al.,

11 For more detailed information including by results governorate see p. 50 and Table 13 on p. 51.
12 The World Food Programme’s mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (mVAM) project collects food security data through short mobile phone surveys, using SMS, live telephone interviews and an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system. Data collections are recurrent.
In addition, lack of liquidity and the resort to negative coping mechanisms – purchasing lower quality foods and borrowing money – were becoming more common once the currency devaluation increased prices of imported and domestic food items and decreased the purchasing power of Iraqis (WFP et al., 2021d).

In March 2021, WFP's Hunger Monitoring System noted an improvement in the consumption patterns in Iraq compared to the end of February. The data collected on 14 March revealed that around 2.3 million people in Iraq consumed insufficient food, a decrease of around 100 000 individuals compared to the end of February. Results varied across governorates, with Babil reporting the highest proportion of insufficient food consumption – with approximately 19 percent of the population consuming inadequate quantities of food.

What were the immediate effects of the crisis and associated measures on agrifood systems?

Price fluctuations

During the last two weeks of March 2020, food and non-food prices started surging in fragile areas of Iraq, especially in the Diyala, Duhok, Wasit and Ninewa Governorates; this was primarily due to panic-purchases spurred by the COVID-19 mitigation measures imposed by the Republic of Iraq and KRG. Sugar prices increased by 100 percent in Erbil. Potato prices increased by 88 percent in Ninewa and by 50 percent in Wasit. Egg prices increased in Salah al-Din by 48 percent (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020a).

Thanks to the government’s price control measures (including taking legal actions against any vendor manipulating prices) (WFP, FAO and World Bank, 2020a), prices began to stabilize in April, with predictable spikes due to production seasonality (the 23 percent increase in tomato prices in April had dropped by 28 percent in May). The value of WFP's food basket for cash-based transfers (CBT), based on 2 100 kcal/person/day, has also remained relatively stable, with a minor increase at the governorate level (1 percent) until late December.

The devaluation of the Iraqi dinar caused price increases in locally-produced and imported food products. Sharp increases were observed in the price of basic food commodities compared to the third week of December 2020, including for vegetable oil, wheat flour, rice and sugar. The average price of vegetable oil increased by 31 percent (from ID 1 556 to ID 2042, equivalent to USD 1.07 to USD 1.40 per litre), followed by a 25 percent increase in wheat flour prices (from ID 825 to ID 1 033, equivalent to USD .57 to USD .71 per kilogram). Vegetable oil price increases nationally were driven by the increases in six governorates (Babil, Baghdad, Wasit, Kerbala, Diwaniya and Salah Al-din), which ranged between 50 and 60 percent 2019 (year-on-year 2020 price increase). Rice and sugar prices increased by 15 percent (from ID 1 633 to ID 1 872, equivalent to USD 1.12 to USD 1.28 per kg) and 12 percent (from ID 950 to ID 1,68, equivalent to USD .65 to per kg) respectively. The prices of staple commodities, including white beans, eggs and powdered milk, increased by 17 percent, 13 percent and 11 percent respectively from those of late December 2020. Food prices eventually stabilized after the currency devaluation but never returned to their pre-devaluation value (WFP et al., 2021d).

At the same time, the failure to approve the federal budget on time and reduced government revenues led to a delay in the delivery of ration card items to Iraqi citizens. Coupled with higher food prices, this further reduced their purchasing potential, most likely causing a further deterioration in the food security situation.
Trade flows
The temporary closing of the borders with Iran, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia put pressure on the food supply chain for certain imported food products. However, no physical shortages were reported on the domestic market and there were ample domestic wheat harvests, thanks to the incentives offered to farmers and decreased wheat import requirements. In the autumn of 2020, Iraq managed an export sale of barley for the first time. Moreover, the MoA facilitated the export of dates to several countries (WFP et al., 2020 h). Easing the restrictions imposed on external transfers by the Central Bank helped to make this happen (WFP et al., 2020). During the first ten months of 2020, Iraq imported about 851 000 metric tonnes (MT) of wheat and wheat products from Turkey, similar to the levels imported in the first ten months of 2019, but 20 percent less than during the same period in 2018.

In October, the KRG MoAWR decided to allow the import of tomatoes, following an increase in local prices due to higher seasonal demand.

In August 2020, the Export-Import Bank of the United States (EXIM) approved a USD 450 million loan to Iraq for the purchase of US goods and services, including rice and other agricultural products (WFP et al., Story, 2020) This loan followed a USD 5 billion Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Iraqi government and EXIM in October 2019 to identify potential projects in Iraq that fit the procurement criteria.

Production
Iraq’s food supply depends heavily on state schemes and agriculture is highly government-controlled. Through its support for the agricultural sector, the government succeeded in raising production levels during the pandemic by supporting farmers, livestock breeders and poultry producers and encouraging investment opportunities to provide products at reasonable prices. In addition, the government exempted farmers and other agriculture supply chain actors from movement restrictions, in an effort to safeguarding food production and keeping food prices for basic commodities stable during the pandemic (the latter with mixed success). Agricultural production has proven to be resilient to shocks and capable of delivering food despite economic challenges. The Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) estimated that in 2020, some 1.76 million MT of barley were harvested, slightly more than the 1.52 million MT harvested in 2019. The recovery of crude oil prices at the beginning of 2021 allowed the government to pay more for input and output subsidies. However, adverse climatic conditions (i.e., the reduction in rainfall between the end of 2020 and the beginning of 2021) affected wheat and barley harvests (which are primarily rainfed) in the Kurdistan region and decreased grazing for livestock. The reduction of the grazing area led to an increase in prices for fodder crops and animal feed (WFP et al., 2021f).

SMEs
Together with IOM and the International Trade Centre (ITC), FAO conducted a panel study tracking 893 businesses in Iraq over the first nine months of the pandemic (4 round panel survey). The study showed that the pandemic negatively impacted small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which experienced significant revenue losses and an overall decline in production and employment from March to December 2020.

Seven out of ten SMEs across all sectors reported production and sales were negatively affected by an average of 53 percent between June and September, with the food and agriculture sector reporting a 50 percent negative impact. The capacity of businesses to retain employees
National agrifood systems and COVID-19 in Iraq

recovered towards the end of 2020, with an average increase of 27 percent in the number of total employees, with the food and agriculture sector retaining 21 percent of its employees.

SMEs saw their monthly revenue cut in half by the end of June 2020. However, revenue began to recover between June and the end of August 2020 (198 percent on average). Before the pandemic, in February 2020, food and agriculture SMEs reported an average of USD 6 582 monthly revenue, which dropped by over 50 percent to an average of USD 2 870 by June 2020. However, the sector saw an improvement in monthly revenue from June to August to an average of USD 3 509 (a 249 percent increase). The pandemic also affected SMEs in other ways. The three top reported issues in the food and agriculture sector were temporary shutdowns (41 percent), clients not paying their bills (30 percent) and a reduction in investments (30 percent). Other issues created by COVID-19 included problems with infrastructure and the spoilage of raw materials, employee absences due to sickness or childcare (8 percent), increased administrative bottlenecks (8 percent). (IOM, FAO and ITC, 2021).

Firms reported on average a significant decrease in revenue, which partially increased after relaxing the restrictive measure. However, as of the final panel, revenues had not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Business owners resorted to different coping strategies to survive the critical period, including requesting leniency in paying financial debts, moving to online sales and reducing employment.

Whereas employment gender gap was already high before the pandemic, job loss affected women more than men, thus resulting in an increase in gender gap. When asked about the desired government support to cope with the pandemic, most SMEs reported that financial programmes to support business and rent subsidies would have the greatest impact (IOM, FAO and ITC, 2021).

What were the immediate effects of the health and economic crises and associated measures on people's livelihoods, food insecurity and malnutrition status, and future prospects?

Loss of job and increased food insecurity

The reduction in economic activity caused by falling oil prices and the COVID-19-related recession affected vulnerable groups in two ways: the loss of employment and income and the government’s difficulty in supporting them due to reduced revenue. Vulnerable groups such as daily casual labourers, low-income workers and IDPs and refugees were severely affected (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020a).

By June 2020, 25 percent of people that were employed before lockdown had been permanently laid off. It has been estimated that an additional 4.5 million people have been pushed below the poverty line by the pandemic (UNDP, 2021). Household income levels decreased, as did access to food and the ability to meet basic needs without resorting to coping strategies.

The government’s restrictive measure created difficulties for displaced populations and refugees to obtain documentation. Proper identification is of extremely importance for these groups to benefit from social protection programmes and humanitarian aid. The costs of the COVID-19 test and related documentation were restrictively high for many of those households. As reported by UNDP (2021), 14 IDP camps and 2 informal sites were closed in 2020, affecting a total of 34 000 people.
In one year (March/December), The COVID-19 has caused further damage in an already fragile context, slowing down the economy.

**Which groups are most likely to be severely impacted by COVID-19 and associated measures?**

The immediate health effects of COVID-19, such as the loss of jobs, reduced wages, increased expenditures and service disruptions, have fallen most heavily on people with pre-existing vulnerabilities. However, three groups of the population stand out: forcibly displaced people, women, and young population (children and adolescents).

**Forcibly displaced people**

Forcibly displaced populations have been increasingly exposed to health risks, amplifying their pre-existing vulnerabilities (UNHCR, 2020b). In May 2020, the Global Cluster Report related that the COVID-19 pandemic in Iraq had increased the needs of the 1.4 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the 4.1 million returnees that had required assistance in the pre-COVID-19 period (GPC, 2020). The UNHCR reported that in July 2020, more than 6.7 million Iraqis — around 18 percent of the population — needed humanitarian assistance and protection (UNHCR, 2021). Most of the affected population lives in host communities; the rest are spread across 40 camps, where movement restrictions have seriously impacted the delivery of aid.

In August 2019 (pre-COVID-19), the government closed several IDP camps, intending to help the IDPs to return to their areas of origin by the end of 2020 (UNHCR, 2020a). The process has not been easy, and the camp closures have created secondary displacements and deprived thousands of people of access to basic services. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly increased humanitarian and socio-economic needs (OCHA, 2021d).

**Women**

The COVID-19 restrictive measures have exacerbated inequalities for women and girls (UNFPA, 2020). The status of women was already precarious before the pandemic: in 2019, Iraq ranked 120 out of 189 countries on the UNDP Gender Inequality Index (GII) (UNDP, 2020). The participation of women in the labour market was among the lowest in the world due to discriminatory laws and social norms around their roles (World Bank, 2020c).

As a result of the pandemic, women face greater difficulties in accessing health and support services; they also have more domestic and caregiving responsibilities while, at the same time having limited decision-making powers and lacking information about the pandemic itself (OXFAM, 2020). Moreover, an increase in all forms of gender-based violence (GBV) has been reported (CARE, 2020).

**Young people**

Iraq has one of the youngest populations in the world. Iraqis under 18 years comprise 45 percent of the total population of the country.

COVID-19 represents the most recent threat to young people. Before the pandemic, one out of five children and adolescents lived in poverty (UNICEF and World Bank, 2020). The youth unemployment rate has always been very high. In Iraq, children under 14 work in precarious jobs such as begging, working in in garages or factories, as domestic labour or as street sellers (US DoL, 2019).
Since the outbreak of the pandemic, the child poverty rate has almost doubled, with two children out of every five, or 37.9 percent of all children living in poverty (UNICEF and World Bank, 2020). Increased poverty increases the risk of abuse and exploitation by criminals and extremists (Memo, 2020). Economic pressures have also raised the risk of child labour (RPC, 2020) and child marriage—since these practices are recognized negative coping mechanisms for vulnerable households living in poverty.

The pandemic has also negatively affected the education sector, which has suffered from years of non-existent investment and general instability. When schools closed in response to the pandemic, 10 million children (from 6 to 17 years) were affected (Basnews, 2020); the vast majority of children in IDP camps (Salah Al Din, Anbar, Ninewa, and Baghdad) have not received any schooling given the lack of means to support distance learning activities (Mercy Hands, 2020).

Managing the partial reopening of schools was not easy for the authorities due to their lack of capacity (and resources) to provide water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities, school feeding and vaccination programmes, and remote learning options.

Other vulnerable groups

Elderly men and women require proper health care and nutrition during the pandemic since some also suffer from chronic diseases. In addition, the disabled and people with special needs have faced a lack of special medical supplies and the diminishing and poorly-resourced medical and hospital care.

Urban populations have been affected by broken supply chains, the informality of employment and closure of businesses and street markets. The unemployed, numbering about four million people, is a highly vulnerable group that has been growing since the outbreak of COVID-19. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the pandemic has exposed vulnerable groups to food insecurity and restricts their access to health care and other benefits (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs 2020). Casual daily labourers, including migrant workers, have been unable to get work and have very limited access to social safety nets.

Slum dwellers, who lack the most basic means of subsistence, are a very low-income group characterized by insufficient nutrition and a lack of access to healthcare. According to the Ministry of Planning, the number of informal settlements in Iraq reached 3 716, with 1 002 complexes in Baghdad and 700 in Nineveh and Basra. According to the last available census estimates the number of slums reached 524 944, and the number of citizens living in slums reached 3 359 642 people (CSO, 2016).
FOOD FOR REFLECTION: LONG-TERM POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Long-term implications of COVID-19 for food systems

The COVID-19 pandemic aggravated pre-existing structural factors, which prolong its impacts. For example, the movement restrictions and curfews imposed to help slow transmission of the virus have caused economic distress and have exposed the fragility of supply chains. In addition, the pandemic has halted or slowed down humanitarian response and has brought social protection systems (such as the PDS) into crisis. As a result, the Iraqi Government has had to take measures to reduce the impact of the crisis on the economy, the society and people with major social protection needs.

Iraq is the developing world’s largest oil exporter, and oil contributes to 90 percent of the government’s revenue. The decline in oil prices and related oil revenues led the government to undertake policy reforms to mitigate risks and restore the economy. According to estimates by the International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2021b), Iraq’s economy contracted by 11 percent in 2020, making Iraq the worst-affected country in OPEC. Compared to other MENA oil exporters, Iraq had the lowest non-oil-based revenue as a percentage of GDP, meaning that the government cannot rely on other sources of revenue to compensate for the budget deficit (WFP, 2021). Oil revenues are critical for Iraq because they fund the government’s universal food subsidy programme, the PDS, which is distributed every month. The pandemic was partly responsible for the 21 percent currency devaluation of the Iraqi dinar in December 2020, which almost immediately led to an increase in the prices of goods and foodstuffs (through imported inputs and consumer goods). As a result, the devaluation caused severe disruptions in Iraqi markets and fluctuations in the purchasing power of individuals.

The border crossings are considered strategic assets that need to be strengthened by infrastructure and well-trained personnel. Efficient health checks and quarantine procedures should keep delays in check.

In the long run, the government needs to strengthen social protection policy in Iraq. While there was a one-time expanded payment to 600 000 beneficiaries of the Social Protection Network, the amount of top-up payment is unclear as is the reason it reached only around half of the network beneficiaries. It is also not clear whether there has been any attempt by the government to reach more beneficiaries. New programmes have been launched – such as a new cash disbursement programme ‘Minha’ (meaning grant) but their coverage is unclear, running the risk of some beneficiaries receiving multiple transfers, and others receiving none.

The Central Bank of Iraq (CBI) also introduced measures to mitigate the impact of the crisis on households and businesses. However, a major stimulus package is still needed to restart the economy. The recent increase in oil prices during the second half of 2021 should make this possible. A broad review of government spending was proposed by the Crisis Cell for Financial and Fiscal Reform in its White Paper for Economic Reforms, adopted in October 2020 (Iraq, 2020c).

In the agriculture and water sectors, the government and international partners are working on an action and investment plan that aims to invest in priority areas, such as irrigation and human capital, water and soil management practices, innovations and climate adaptation.

In considering different scenarios and alternative financing options, Iraq needs to look at its import policy. Iraq imports more than USD 5 billion worth of food and agricultural products from Turkey and Iran. Over time (Today News, 2020), Iraq has achieved self-sufficiency in wheat and
barley crops and some agricultural products and has started to export them.\(^{13}\) At this stage, Iraq must establish a framework and dialogue for broader regional trade integration as a starting point for cooperation and a more comprehensive strategy on regional food security. However, an in-depth value and supply chain analysis is first required to assess the comparative advantage of Iraq regarding specific commodities and to determine how they integrate into the broader regional food system.

The government’s priorities are to support the growth of the oil and gas sector by liquidating the arrears owed to international oil companies, attracting foreign investment, increasing public spending on reconstruction projects, improving public services and creating job opportunities.

To achieve food security based on the four pillars of availability, utilization, accessibility, and sustainability, Iraq needs to develop a vision and a policy by:

- studying the macroeconomic situation and developing plans to exit the rentier economy that depends wholly on the export of oil;
- re-evaluating intra-regional trade in the country (governorates and regional);
- increasing food availability by increasing production with support from public policies and investments and an enabling environment for private sector investment;
- developing agricultural investments and creating productive infrastructures;
- supporting the agricultural sector and agro-industries and creating agricultural-industrial integration to boost the economy.

Achieving a higher degree of self-sufficiency implies \textit{inter alia} the following:

- supporting small-scale food processors and agricultural SMEs;
- supporting women and youth engaged in agriculture through cooperatives;
- providing agricultural inputs;
- increasing productivity and the commercialization capacity of smallholders for specific commodities;
- addressing water management to more efficiently and effectively use available surface and groundwater.

**Implications for long-term policy assistance from the humanitarian and development communities**

The United Nations (UN) has provided humanitarian and development support in response to the pandemic, while continuing its support to millions of IDPs and returnee families. In Iraq, the UN’s humanitarian assistance is channelled through the Humanitarian Response Plan while development work takes place within the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Iraq, 2020–2024. Recently a fifth theme\(^{14}\) has been added (‘durable solutions’), which brings together resources and expertise to support vulnerable groups.

Under various coordination mechanisms supporting the agricultural and water sectors – starting with the Donor Coordination Group on Agriculture and Water (DCG-AW) – discussions are being held around how best to bring structural change to Iraq. As co-chairs of the DCG-AW, FAO and the Netherlands are working with partners such as the World Bank and the ITC to operationalize

\(^{13}\) The recent drought conditions in Iraq may bring into question the feasibility of this self-sufficiency objective.

\(^{14}\) The other strategic priorities or themes, are: 1) achieving social cohesion, social protection, and social inclusion; 2) promoting effective, inclusive, accountable and efficient institutions and services; 3) promoting natural resource and disaster risk management, and climate change resilience to achieve a better, safer and more sustainable future for all, and 4) achieving dignified lives. More information available \url{here}. 
the White Paper on Economic Reform and recent policies such as the Food Security Strategy and Zero Hunger Strategy. The demand for structural reforms and new technologies and innovations – which Iraq has needed for years – is clear and there is international commitment to support the government and people at both national and decentralized levels.

FAO, IFAD, the World Bank and WFP will continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on the food security situation in Iraq. Several investments have been made to improve monitoring of agriculture and natural resources – starting with water – and early warning systems are being made developed to better inform decision-makers to respond to immediate needs as well as to address structural factors that limit economic growth and food security for all.

Support for agriculture and food production

In July 2020, the MoA announced plans to cultivate 250,000 hectares of land with cereals and other crops adapted to Iraq’s agro-ecological climate, such as olives and pistachios.

In August and September 2020, the MoA hosted a meeting for date producers, exporters and investors to discuss advancing the date palm sector, having identified date-palm as strategic crop for the country. The government urged stakeholders to invest in improving the date-palm supply chain, including through better packaging and advanced marketing methods, and affirmed that the government would support the export of surplus.

In January 2021, the MoA, together with the MoT, increased its support for exporting agricultural products, including by using fast-tracked export licensing and infrastructure investments to facilitate aggregation, especially in southern governorates.

In October 2020, the MoA started a new programme to provide agricultural land to farmers and agricultural graduates while granting them both financial loans and supplies (WFP et al., 2020f). This is in line with Iraq’s policy of increasing its self-sufficiency in crops and agricultural products.

The government’s October 2020 White Paper on Economic Reform, mentioned earlier, provides the basis for internal discussions and negotiations with international organizations for much-needed investments to support the reforms. Figure 2. below shows the number and type of organization supporting the Iraqi government in 2020. 

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FIGURE 3 | Number of organizations by type of organization that supported the Iraqi government in 2020

Source: Financial Tracking Service, OCHA.
INFORMATION AND GOVERNANCE

Implications of the crisis for conflict and ongoing social tensions

Food security monitoring and surveillance

In March 2020, FAO and the Republic of Iraq approached WFP, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Bank to consider an initiative to monitor the impact of the pandemic on food security in Iraq, with a focus on availability, access, utilization and stability. It has also increased collaboration with other partners such as IOM and ITC and NGOs operating under the Food Security Cluster. Close consultation with the government has been key to obtaining feedback and buy-in for the publication of the monitoring reports.

The following three information products are published on a regular basis:

- **Bi-weekly reports** (WFP, FAO, IFAD and the World Bank) that focus on food supply and demand (food price monitoring and government decisions in response to pandemic).
- **Periodic analytical reports** (WFP, FAO, IFAD and the World Bank) that detail the impact of the pandemic on food supply and demand based on interviews with i) farmers; ii) agricultural input suppliers; iii) agricultural extension officers; and iv) senior officials in MoA. The reports include policy recommendations; two reports have been published and a third is on the way.
- **Impact of COVID-19 on SMEs** (FAO, IOM, and ITC) that investigates how the pandemic is affecting the local business environment and employment situation for urban and peri-urban populations. Two reports have been produced and a third is under way. A new mobile application called Tamwini was launched under the partnership between the MoT and WFP to digitalize the PDS. The application allows families to update their personal information and life events (market spending, deaths, births, etc.) and receive electronic cash transfers without travelling to PDS service centres, reducing the risk of spreading COVID-19. The MoT and WFP has piloted the app in Baghdad Governorate with the intention to expand to other governorates (WFP, FAO and the World Bank, 2020d).

Lessons learned

At the end of 2021, while the pandemic is still wreaking social and economic havoc in the region, this is an opportunity to reflect on the work undertaken and list several lessons that have been learned.

- The Republic of Iraq, though its Crisis Cell coordination structure (centrally and in every Ministry, including the KRG), has generally been quick to react and has been proactive about announcing daily/weekly updates on prevention and mitigation measures needed to protect people from the pandemic and to secure their access to jobs, basic services and food.
- International partners have responded quickly by investing in a nation-wide food security monitoring system that provides frequent updates on food supply (mainly prices) and demand. Early on, it was recognized that the drop in global oil prices could have devastating effects on the public sector if national revenues fell dramatically. Many millions of people depend on the government for salaries, subsidies agricultural inputs and outputs, grants, etc.
The produced monitoring and other reports have been responding well to needs by government and international partners, to support various food security information system functions, including strategic monitoring, supporting needs assessments and policy decision-making. The broad focus on food supply and demand supports the preferred food systems or value chain approach for selected commodities.
**ANNEX: COVID-19-RELATED PROJECTS ON WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE (WASH)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donor organization</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Amount allocated (in US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ZOA</td>
<td>COVID-19 emergency assistance to vulnerable households in Mosul and Baghdad and KRG camps</td>
<td>117 371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of the United States of America (USAID/OFDA)</td>
<td>Water, sanitation and hygiene, economic recovery and market systems, shelter and settlements</td>
<td>12 792 883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department/Polish Humanitarian Action</td>
<td>Safe and dignified water, sanitation and hygiene for Hasansham U2, Hasansham U3, Khazir M1, and Mamilian IDPs camps in Ninawa Governorate</td>
<td>1 098 901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of Germany/CARE International</td>
<td>Maternal health, WASH and protection services to crisis-affected population. Multiyear: 2020 portion</td>
<td>1 176 344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of Canada</td>
<td>United Nations Children's Fund, WASH</td>
<td>767 877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department</td>
<td>Solidarités International (essential humanitarian services through a coordinated and principled approach to multi-displaced population facing the consequences of camp closure and consolidation in Iraq</td>
<td>1 364 629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of United States of America/NGOs (USAID/OFDA)</td>
<td>WASH ()</td>
<td>2 500 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donor organization</td>
<td>Project</td>
<td>Amount allocated (in US$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of Sweden/Norwegian Refugee Council</td>
<td>PBA support for camp Management, education, ICLA, LFS, shelter and settlements and WASH</td>
<td>1 045 478</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government of Norway/ACT Alliance Norwegian Church Aid</td>
<td>Save lives, alleviate suffering and protect human dignity, with a focus on WASH, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (ASRH) and protection.</td>
<td>997 515</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government of Japan/United Nations Development Programme</td>
<td>Support for an inclusive and multisectoral response to COVID-19 and address its socio-economic impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government of Australia /United Nations Children's Fund</td>
<td>WASH</td>
<td>2 609 263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department/Polish Humanitarian Action</td>
<td>Safe and dignified water, sanitation and hygiene for Hasansham U2, Hasansham U3, Khazir M1, and Mamilian IDPs camps in Ninawa Governorate</td>
<td>1 098 901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of USA (USAID/OFDA) to NGOs (details not yet provided)</td>
<td>WASH</td>
<td>2 609 263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection/Concern Worldwide</td>
<td>Care and maintenance of WASH facilities for IDP Camps in Dohuk and Ninawa</td>
<td>1 244 344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department/Solidarités International</td>
<td>Essential humanitarian services through a coordinated and principled approach to displaced populations facing the consequences of camp closure and consolidation (part of</td>
<td>818 777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq Humanitarian Fund/Solidarité International pour l’Afrique</td>
<td>Provide integrated water sanitation and hygiene services in camps to prevent COVID-19 and mitigate negative health outcomes for the most vulnerable populations</td>
<td>1 125 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government of Germany/Deutsche Welthungerhilfe e.v. (German Agro Action)</td>
<td>Contain COVID-19 and its effects through humanitarian food security and WASH aid to vulnerable communities affected by the pandemic</td>
<td>668 052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donor organization</td>
<td>Project</td>
<td>Amount allocated (in US$)</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of Germany/Rebuild and Relief International NGO Gmbh</td>
<td>Emergency assistance for internally displaced people and returnees in Iraq;</td>
<td>668 052</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government of USA/Mercy Corps</td>
<td>WASH needs for COVID-19 response</td>
<td>6 250 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government of Germany/Help - Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe e.v.</td>
<td>Emergency aid project to improve water access for displaced persons, returnees, and host communities in newly-accessible areas in Ninawa</td>
<td>351 896</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government of USA/Danish Refugee Council</td>
<td>WASH in Salah al-Din, Diyala and Ninawa</td>
<td>3 257 142</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government of Japan/Peace winds Japan</td>
<td>Facilitate sustainable environments, social stabilization and inclusive communities through maintenance of WASH facilities with participation of residents; WASH awareness activities and training for livelihood capacity building</td>
<td>931 906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of Switzerland/Terre des Hommes International</td>
<td>COVID-19: Additional credit 2020: Tdh COVID-19 WASH, protection and basic needs assistance for already vulnerable returnee and/or IDP communities in post-conflict districts in Ninawa and Salah al-Din Governorates</td>
<td>551 876</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government of Canada/International Organization for Migration</td>
<td>WASH Sector 2020 funding from multiyear International Humanitarian Assistance</td>
<td>14 189</td>
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<td>Government of Czech Republic/ United Nations Children's Fund</td>
<td>WASH.</td>
<td>417 886</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iraq Humanitarian Fund/ Danish Refugee Council</td>
<td>WASH assistance in Ninawa Governorate</td>
<td>100 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government of the United States of America/NGOs (details not yet provided)</td>
<td>WASH (USAID/OFDA)</td>
<td>6 700 000</td>
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### National agrifood systems and COVID-19 in Iraq

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Donor organization</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Amount allocated (in US$)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government of the United States of America (USAID/OFDA) to NGOs (details not yet provided)</td>
<td>WASH and protection</td>
<td>5,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of France/Solidarités International</td>
<td>Emergency response to returnees in Sin jar and Baa districts</td>
<td>176,263</td>
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<td>Government of the United States of America (USAID/OFDA) through International Organization for Migration (IOM)</td>
<td>WASH</td>
<td>7,816,000</td>
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<td>Government of France/Solidarités International</td>
<td>Support to Syrian refugees in Bardarash camp to ensure their access to water, hygiene and sanitation services</td>
<td>293,772</td>
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<tr>
<td>European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department/United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)</td>
<td>WASH</td>
<td>559,191</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government of the United States of America/OXFAM</td>
<td>Integrated WASH, Emergency Management Response System (EMRS), and protection activities in Ninawa and Kirkuk; cash for Work (CfW)</td>
<td>200,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government of Germany/OXFAM</td>
<td>Contribute to community rehabilitation and recovery, ensure equitable access to WASH and shelter, and the protection of conflict-affected populations in Salah al Din and Anbar</td>
<td>1,654,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of Germany/OXFAM</td>
<td>Contribute to recovery and strengthening resilience of conflict-affected people in Salah al-din</td>
<td>1,654,802</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government of Canada/OXFAM</td>
<td>WASH infrastructure, COVID-19 protection and response in Salah Al Din (SAD) and Ninawa</td>
<td>1,307,894</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government of Netherlands/OXFAM</td>
<td>Prevent spread of COVID-19 through public health promotion, WASH and managing protection risks in Baghdad and Missan</td>
<td>262,843</td>
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<td>Government of Germany/OXFAM</td>
<td>WASH infrastructure rehabilitation, financial and technical support to small</td>
<td>657,109</td>
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### National agrifood systems and COVID-19 in Iraq

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donor organization</th>
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<th>Amount allocated (in US$)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government of Norway/ACT Alliance/Norwegian Church Aid</td>
<td>Save lives, alleviate suffering and protect human dignity. Focus: WASH, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (ASRH) and protection.</td>
<td>658,423</td>
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<td>Swiss Development Cooperation/Swiss Humanitarian Aid/ OXFAM</td>
<td>WASH services and livelihoods in Kirkuk and Diyala for COVID-19 response and development</td>
<td>1,103,753</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iraq Humanitarian Fund/Lutheran World Relief</td>
<td>WASH in COVID-19 quarantine and isolation areas in Shekinan, Shariya, Bajet Kandala and Berseve 2 IDP camps</td>
<td>698,597</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


https://baghdadtoday.news/news/115910/%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%AB%D9%8A%D9%82%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D9%84


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https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Iraq_key_socio-economic_indicators.pdf


National agrifood systems and COVID-19 in Iraq


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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation programme (FIRST) is a strategic partnership between the European Union and FAO. Through a network of policy officers embedded in government bodies, it works hand in hand with over 22 countries on setting the right conditions to promote both public and private investments in sustainable agriculture and creating an enabling environment for these investments to contribute to achieving food security and nutrition.

Launched by the European Union, FAO and the World Food Programme at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, the Global Network against Food Crises is an alliance of humanitarian and development actors united by the commitment to tackle the root causes of food crises and promote sustainable solutions to eradicate hunger and malnutrition through leveraging analysis and knowledge sharing, strengthened coordination in supporting evidence-based policy responses and collective efforts across the Humanitarian, Development and Peace (HDP) nexus.

A joint effort between FIRST with the Global Network has produced assessments on policy responses related to COVID-19 and their impact on agrifood systems in 13 countries. In particular, FIRST brought policy analysis capacities to support the programming priorities of FAO’s Office of Emergencies and Resilience (OER) and the Global Network in these countries; FAO’s OER and the Global Network provided quantitative assessments of the impacts of the pandemic on food security and nutrition.

Under the guidance of Dr. Salah Hajj Al Hassan (FAO Representative), a core team of experts wrote a full first draft of the report: René Verduijn (lead), Edward Thomas, and Dr Al-Khattab, with contributions from the FIRST management team and the Technical Support Unit of the Global Network against Food Crisis. The Country team extends special thanks to the teams from FAO, WFP, WB, IFAD, IOM and ITC that have contributed to the regular joint publications monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on food security in Iraq since April 2020. This report has extensively used the information included in the monitoring reports.