

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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## Iraq

**Post:** Baghdad

### Mesopotamian Minute September 12 2010

**Report Categories:**

Agriculture in the News

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**Report Highlights:**

In this *Minute*, USDA assistance to reform Iraq's domestic food assistance program, the Public Distribution System, troubling water levels at the Dokan Dam, extension efforts in the Taji area just north of Baghdad, and a revised, though not final, estimate of 2010's wheat crop are discussed.

## General Information:

# MESOPOTAMIAN MINUTE

- *Current News on Agriculture & USDA in Iraq* -

Office of Agricultural Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Baghdad

Sunday, September 12, 2010



Food Programs Team welcomed by Fmr. Ambassador Ryan Croker at the George Bush School of Government, Texas A&M

### **USDA Helps Iraq Tackle Domestic Feeding Program**

- From August 22<sup>nd</sup> to September 5<sup>th</sup> seven high level Iraqi Ministry of Trade officials visited USDA's Food and Nutrition Service and Texas A&M to learn about the administration of the SNAP and other programs as well as electronic benefit payments. The training is part a broader effort to improve the management, enforcement, and targeting of Iraq's troubled Public Distribution Program (PDS) feeding program. A World Food Program representative also participated. The training was organized by USDA's Cochran Fellowship Program.

**Dokan Dam** - USDA drew attention to a developing water situation in Northern Iraq last week. The rapid drawdown of a major storage reservoir (Dokan) for hydro-electric power generation is threatening fall and early winter irrigation and livestock water availability along the Tigris corridor. By Embassy Baghdad's signaling the reduced water flow to GoI authorities, action to reduce discharge is expected post-Eid.

**Taji Agricultural Extension** – Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Taji hosted USDA Extension Advisor David Drew for a three-day tour of demonstration farms and Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture Extension and Provincial Agricultural facilities. A major wholesale/retail agricultural supply facility was also evaluated. The purpose of the engagement was to evaluate the current state and effectiveness of extension activities in Iraq at the field level.

**Iraq's 2010/11 Wheat Production** - The final wheat production estimate is still being determined. Iraq's 2010/11 crop exceeded expectations and may be as much as double the drought reduced crops of the previous two years. High level officials in the respective Iraq and Kurdistan Ministries of Agriculture put domestic production at 2.45 MMT, and estimate that another hundred thousand tons of imported wheat was recently delivered to Ministry of Trade silos. In a forthcoming report, USDA/Baghdad is penciling in domestic production at 2.6 MMT.

**Personnel Update-** There are currently 34 USDA personnel in Iraq including those with Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), at Embassy Baghdad or embedded with U.S. military units. After a year, Senior Agricultural Attaché Paul Spencer departs September 13 and has been replaced by Charles Rush. Balad PRT AgAdvisor Franklin Johnson departed after 18 months in Iraq.