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Gilgit-Baltistan Grapples with Wheat Shortage as Subsidized Supplies Stall

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Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) is facing a dire wheat shortage as subsidized stocks have run dry, with federal government delays in releasing allocated supplies sparking fears of a food crisis. Despite a Rs20 billion budget allocation for 170,000 tonnes of wheat, not a single sack has reached the region, leaving residents struggling and exposing federal inefficiencies.

The crisis, reported on July 20, 2025, has left GB's food department scrambling, as reserve stocks were depleted during recent flash floods. Local official Muhammad Hussain told Dawn, "Not a single bag has been delivered, and people can't afford market prices" (DAWN, July 20, 2025). GB, with only 1% cultivable land, relies heavily on subsidized wheat from the Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (PASSCO). The federal government's failure to deliver has been compounded by damaged infrastructure, including the Karakoram Highway (KKH), where landslides and a weakened Kayal bridge in Kohistan have halted truck deliveries. Transporting goods from Islamabad to remote GB areas now takes weeks, exacerbating the shortage.

Residents, already battered by economic hardship, are vocal about their plight. "This isn't charity; it's our right," said protester Amina Bibi in Skardu, echoing sentiments from the Awami Action Committee (AAC), a coalition of local political and religious groups (@AirMshIRkalim, X post, July 20, 2025). The AAC has long criticized federal neglect, pointing to GB's disputed status and lack of constitutional rights as reasons for sustained subsidies. Past protests, notably in 2023–2024, forced the government to partially restore wheat subsidies after price hikes from Rs20 to Rs36 per kilogram sparked region-wide demonstrations (Wikipedia, January 23, 2024).

The federal government's inaction, despite allocating funds, raises questions about priorities and competence. With GB's 1.5 million residents facing food insecurity, the delay reflects a broader failure to address the region's unique challenges, including its reliance on imports due to minimal local wheat production. As the crisis deepens, calls for

accountability grow louder, urging swift action to restore supplies and prevent further hardship in this vulnerable region.