



GIEWS Country Brief Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

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FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Cereal production in 2020 forecast well below pre-crisis level
- Import requirements of cereals in 2019/20 marketing year estimated at low level
- Food security situation likely to worsen in 2020
- Policies implemented to mitigate impact of COVID-19 amid large fiscal deficit

Cereal production in 2020 forecast well below pre-crisis level

Harvesting of the 2020 cereal, main rice and minor maize, crops is nearing completion and production prospects are unfavourable due to considerably reduced plantings and expected low yields. Shortages of agricultural inputs and fuel significantly affected yields, which were exacerbated by reduced rainfall in the February-April period in key producing centralwestern areas (see ASI map).

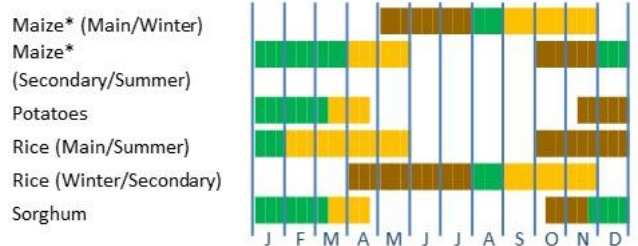
Planting of the minor rice and main maize winter crops started in late May. Seasonal rains started from the last week of May and precipitation amounts are forecast to increase in the June-August period, which could instigate plantings for subsistence farming. However, the aggregate planted area is expected to decline significantly due to the acute scarcity of inputs and fuel. According to farmers associations, supplies of imported agricultural inputs for the winter season covered just 5 percent of the national requirement¹. Amid the low availabilities of inputs and fuel, producers have emphasized the need of using crop rotation practices with non-cereal crops that require less inputs than cereals². Under the Government's *Plan de Financiación y Soporte* (Financing and Support Plan), an agricultural credit scheme of USD 20 million was launched in late April 2020³ to boost agricultural production, especially of cereals. Furthermore, FAO-Venezuela is distributing agricultural inputs (bio-fertilizers) and short-cycled vegetable and bean seeds to smallholder farmers in producing states (Falcón, Lara and Portuguesa) to support agricultural production for self-consumption.

Although official estimates are not available, cereal production in 2020 is expected well below the levels produced during the pre-crisis (2010-2014) period, when the country's output averaged about 3.4 million tonnes.

Venezuela

Crop Calendar

(*major foodcrop)

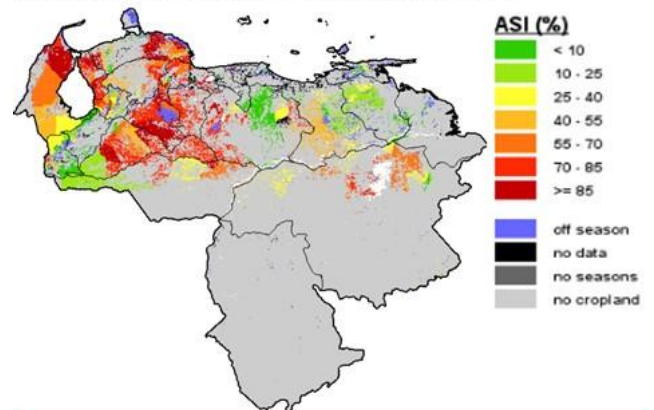


Sowing
Growing
Harvesting

Source: FAO/GIEWS.

Venezuela - Agricultural Stress Index (ASI)

from start of season 1 to Dekad 3, May 2020



Source: FAO/GIEWS Earth Observation System.

Import requirements of cereals in the 2019/20 marketing year are estimated at low level

Import requirements of cereals in the 2019/20 marketing year (July/June) are estimated to have declined for the fourth consecutive year, reflecting the high levels of emigration since 2015 and, therefore, lower domestic consumption needs. In addition, the country's capacity to import has deteriorated due to the continued depreciation of the local currency against the US dollar and the dwindling level of foreign exchange reserves, following the decline in oil revenues and the imposition of international sanctions in August 2017.

Food security situation likely to worsen in 2020

According to the Food Security Assessment conducted by the World Food Programme (WFP) in the third quarter of 2019, about 9.3 million people (one-third of the population) were estimated to be food insecure and in need of assistance, of which 2.3 million (8 percent of the population) were classified as severely food insecure⁴. As of early May 2020, about 5.1 million Venezuelans (17 percent of the total population) decided to leave the country due to the high prevalence of food insecurity⁵. More than half of the total Venezuelans hosted in Colombia and Ecuador (about 1.2 million people) are estimated to be acutely food insecure and in need of assistance⁶. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, about 68 000 Venezuelan migrants returned to the country as of 28 May 2020⁷, triggered by reduced job opportunities due to the containment measures in neighbouring countries. This is likely to strengthen the domestic demand of food and put a strain on the already limited resources of the country, increasing the number of people in need of food assistance.

The food security situation is expected to worsen in 2020 as cereal production is likely to decline and import requirements may not be fully met. The plummeting prices of oil amid the COVID-19 outbreak have reduced export earnings, worsening the country's capacity to purchase imports. In addition, logistical constraints due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are expected to have a negative impact on food access of urban and peri-urban communities.

Policies implemented to mitigate impact of COVID-19 amid large fiscal deficit

In an attempt to contain the COVID-19 outbreak, the Government issued a Decree to restrict the movement of people and commodities and suspend non-essential activities, which was recently extended until 12 June 2020. The Decree, however, sets out a number of exceptions, allowing the movement of people working in the food and agriculture sectors, including supermarkets and small food retailers.

In order to guarantee the supply of food, preferential access to fuel, electricity and transport, permits are given to companies working along the food supply chain. The Government also plans to pay the salaries of employees of small and medium enterprises affected by the confinement measures and suspend the payments of credit debts and mortgages from March 2020 for a period of six months. To guarantee households' food consumption, despite the already large fiscal deficit, the Government allocated USD 14 million to increase the number of food supply centres (community-based and State-run outlets and trucks)⁸. The Government also introduced maximum prices on various basic food items and expanded the coverage of cash transfer programmes, including the new *Bono Quedate en Casa* (Stay at Home Subsidy).

^{1/} [Banca y Negocios](#), January 2020.

^{2/} [Minuta Agropecuaria](#), May 2020.

^{3/} [Venezolana de Televisión](#), April 2020.

^{4/} [Venezuela Food Security Assessment](#), February 2020, WFP.

^{5/} [Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela \(R4V\)](#), accessed on 3 June 2020.

^{6/} [Global Report on Food Crises 2020](#), April 2020, Food Security Information Network.

^{7/} [Ansa Latina](#), May 2020.

^{8/} [Vice-presidency of Venezuela](#), April 2020.

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