



GIEWS Country Brief

The Lao People's Democratic Republic

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FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

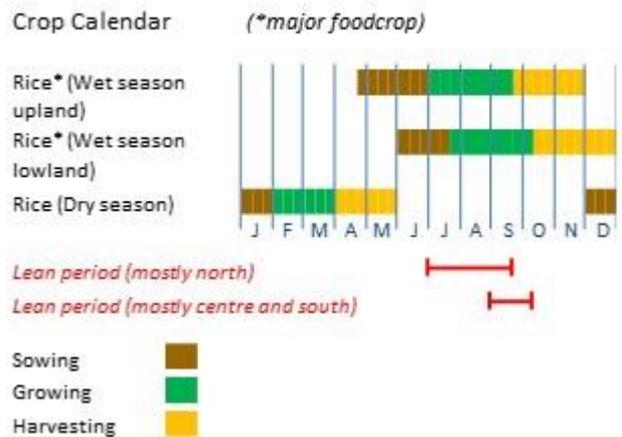
- Aggregate 2020 cereal output forecast close to average level
- Rice exports forecast to expand in 2021
- COVID-19 pandemic and cereal production shortfalls in north heighten food insecurity for vulnerable households

Aggregate 2020 cereal output forecast close to average level

Harvesting of the 2020, mostly rainfed main (wet), paddy crop, accounting for about 90 percent of the annual output, is nearing completion. The May-September rainy (monsoon) season was characterized by an erratic temporal and spatial distribution. Precipitation amounts were average to above average over the main rice producing central and southern provinces, which combined account for about 80 percent of the main crop. By contrast, in minor producing northern provinces and in the central provinces of Vientiane and Xiangkhouang, the season was less favourable. The well below-average rains at planting time between May and July, hindered sowing operations and multiple replanting of crops was required in many areas. Rains improved from August onwards and brought some relief to soil moisture conditions, but they were too late and, in these areas, the harvested area and yields are estimated below the average levels. Farmers are currently planting the 2020 mostly irrigated secondary (dry) crop, for harvest next April, under generally favourable weather conditions. Above-average monsoon precipitation amounts in the southern and central provinces, where the bulk of the secondary crop is grown, contributed to replenishing the reservoirs, water of which will be used to irrigate these crops. The aggregate rice production is forecast at a near-average level of 3.8 million tonnes and about 23 percent above the 2019 output that had been severely affected by drought and floods.

Harvesting of the 2020 maize crop has recently completed and the output is estimated at 1 million tonnes, almost 20 percent below the five-year average. Poor rains from May to September affected crops at critical development stages over the main producing areas located in the north, resulting in below-average area planted and yields. The output is estimated to increase by 40 percent compared 2019, when a severe drought led to widespread wilting of crops.

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Source: FAO/GIEWS, FAO/WFP CFSAM 2019.

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Cereal Production

	2015-2019 average	2019	2020 forecast	change 2020/2019
	000 tonnes			percent
Rice (paddy)	3 714	3 052	3 770	23.5
Maize	1 192	717	1 000	39.5
Total	4 906	3 769	4 770	26.6

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet.

Rice exports forecast to expand in 2021

The country is largely self-sufficient in rice, exporting small volumes of rice to neighbouring countries. In calendar year 2021, rice exports are forecast at 150 000 tonnes, up from the 90 000 tonnes in calendar year 2020.

During the 2020/21 marketing year (July/June), maize exports are forecast well below the five-year average, at 250 000 tonnes, due to low exportable availabilities following reduced outputs in 2019 and 2020.

COVID-19 pandemic and cereal production shortfalls in north heighten food insecurity of vulnerable households

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been severe on the local economy. According to the latest data from the Asian Development Bank, the economic growth is estimated to contract by 2.5 percent in 2020, after it has grown on average by 5 percent per year in the last five years. Income losses associated with the COVID-19-related economic downturn and a strong decrease in remittance inflows heighten food insecurity for the most vulnerable households. In northern parts of the country, cereal production shortfalls for the second consecutive year have limited the availability of food for households' own consumption and reduced income from crop sales, further constraining access to food.

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