



GIEWS Country Brief Sri Lanka

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FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Area planted with 2021 main “Maha” cereal crops forecast above-average level
- Record cereal production obtained in 2020
- Cereal import requirements in 2020 forecast below five-year average
- Domestic prices of rice above year-earlier levels throughout 2020
- Food security overall good, but COVID-19 pandemic having negative impact on vulnerable households

Area planted with 2021 main “Maha” cereal crops forecast above-average level

The bulk of the 2021 main “Maha” paddy crop, accounting for about 70 percent of the annual production, was planted between October and December. Harvesting operations are expected to start in February. Overall, precipitation amounts since October have been close to average over the main paddy producing areas, benefitting planting activities and germination of crops. The attractive prices and Government support in the form of free irrigation water and fertilizer subsidies are also expected to sustain plantings. Favourable precipitations also supported the generally above-average growing conditions for the paddy crop in the main producing areas in North Western, North Central, Eastern and Uva provinces (see ASI).

The 2020 main “Maha” maize crop, for harvest from February onwards, is growing under generally favourable weather conditions. The area planted is forecast at an above-average level, reflecting the high demand by the local feed industry.

Record cereal production obtained in 2020

The 2020 cropping season finalized in September and the aggregate cereal production is estimated at a record of 5.5 million tonnes. The production of paddy is estimated at a record of 5.1 million tonnes, thanks to continued Government support, favourable weather conditions and adequate irrigation water supplies. Similarly, the output of maize reached a bumper level of 364 000 tonnes as a result of record plantings, driven by the strong demand of the local feed industry and above-average yields supported by favourable weather conditions.

Sri Lanka

Crop Calendar

(*major foodcrop)

Maize & Rice* (Second Yala)

Maize (Main Maha)

Rice (Main Maha)*



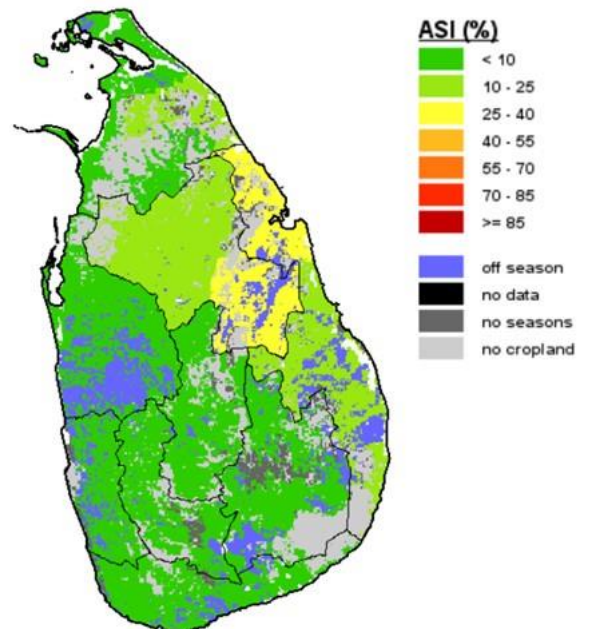
lean period

Sowing
Growing
Harvesting

Source: FAO/GIEWS.

Sri Lanka - Agricultural Stress Index (ASI)

from start of season 1 to dekad 1, December 2020



Source: FAO/GIEWS Earth Observation System.

Cereal import requirements in 2021 forecast below five-year average

In the 2021 calendar year, import requirements of wheat, which is not produced in the country and accounts for the largest share of imports, are forecast at 1.2 million tonnes, close to the five-year average. Similarly, import requirements of maize are expected to remain at an average level of 100 000 tonnes. The country is almost self-sufficient in rice and imports were large quantities only when local production is not sufficient to cover the domestic needs. Imports of rice are forecast at 30 000 tonnes in calendar year 2021.

Domestic prices of rice generally high and stable since March 2020

Prices of rice, the country's main staple food, increased steadily between August 2019 and January 2020. Subsequently, prices decreased in February and March and remained generally stable since then, reflecting good market availabilities from the 2020 harvest. Overall, rice prices were at high levels throughout 2020.

On 4 November 2020, the Government amended the Maximum Retail Prices (MRP) for different types of rice in order to protect consumers from price hikes. The MRPs have been set as follows: LKR 89/kg for raw rice, LKR 92/kg for Nadu (excluding Mottaikarupan and Attakari) and LKR 94/kg for Samba rice.

Prices of imported wheat flour generally decreased between November 2019 to April 2020, weighed by adequate market supplies. Since May, prices showed an increasing trend, reflecting supply disruptions due to movement restriction related to the COVID-19 pandemic and trends in the international markets.

Food security situation overall good, but COVID-19 pandemic having negative impact on vulnerable households

The overall food security situation is good, following two consecutive years of bumper harvests. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has seen severely affected the local economy, with a significant negative impact on the most vulnerable households. According to the latest data by the Asian Development Bank, the economic growth is estimated to contract by 5.5 percent in 2020, the first contraction in 19 years, reflecting the weak performance in construction, textile, mining, tourism and tea sectors. The reduction in economic activities have caused widespread loss of income and livelihoods, sharply reducing the households' purchasing power and limiting their ability to buy foods.

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Cereal Production

	2015-2019	2019	2020	change
	average	000 tonnes		2020/2019
			estimate	percent
Rice (paddy)	4 029	4 592	5 150	12.1
Maize	243	246	364	48.3
Millet	6	5	6	20.0
Total	4 278	4 843	5 520	14.0

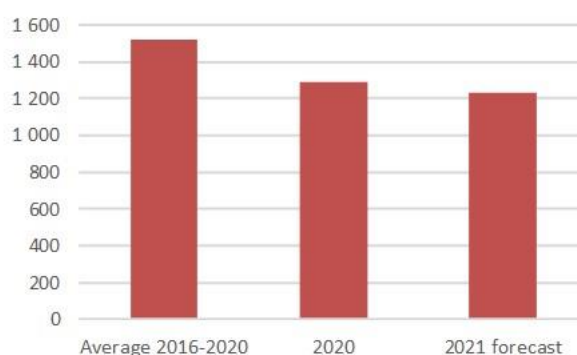
Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet.

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Cereals Imports

000 tonnes



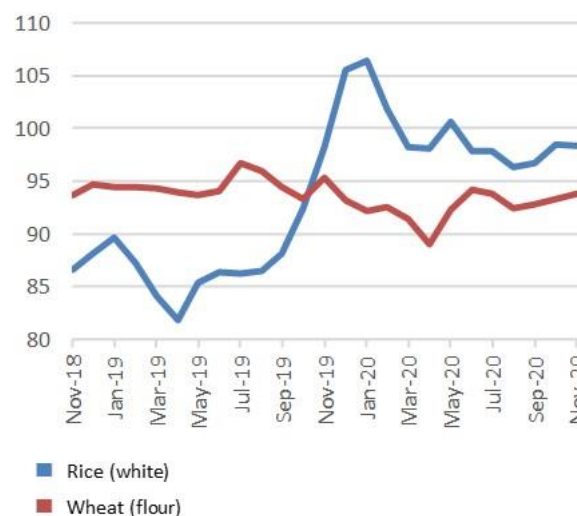
Note: Includes rice in milled terms. Split year refers to individual crop marketing years (for rice, calendar year of second year shown).

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets.

Sri Lanka

Retail prices of rice and wheat flour in Colombo

Sri Lanka Rupee per kg



Source: FAO/GIEWS Food Price Monitoring and Analysis Tool.