



GIEWS Country Brief Rwanda

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FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Poor late season rains affecting yields of “2020B” cereal crops in central areas
- Above-average aggregate cereal production expected in 2020, due to record “2020A” main season harvest
- Prices of maize and beans declined below year-earlier levels in recent months
- Food security situation in urban areas affected by measures to contain spread of COVID-19 pandemic

Poor late season rains affecting yields of “2020B” cereal crops in central areas

Harvesting of the “2020B” crops, accounting for less than 20 percent of the aggregate cereal output, is currently underway and will be concluded in July. The March-May rainy season was characterized by well above-average precipitation in March and April. Subsequently, below-average rains in May affected cereal crops during the flowering phase. The most severe rainfall deficits were recorded over central areas, where vegetation conditions are currently poor (see ASI map) and substantial yield reductions are expected.

Torrential rains in March and April triggered flooding and landslides in several areas, affecting about 11 000 people and resulting in loss of life and damage to infrastructures. However, crop losses, estimated at about 1 000 hectares, have been minimal, amounting to less than 1 percent of the average “B” season area planted.

Planting of the “2020B” season crops in the Eastern Province was affected by the restrictive measures implemented to contain the spread of the COVID 19 outbreak (see Box below) as daily labourers have been unable to travel to some areas due to movement restrictions.

Overall, the “2020B” season cereal production is expected to be slightly below the average of the previous five years.

Above-average aggregate cereal production expected in 2020, due to record “2020A” main season harvest

The main “2020A” harvest, contributing to more than 80 percent of the aggregate cereal output, was concluded last February. The September-December 2019 “short rainy season” was

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Crop Calendar

(*major foodcrop)



Lean periods

Lean periods

Sowing

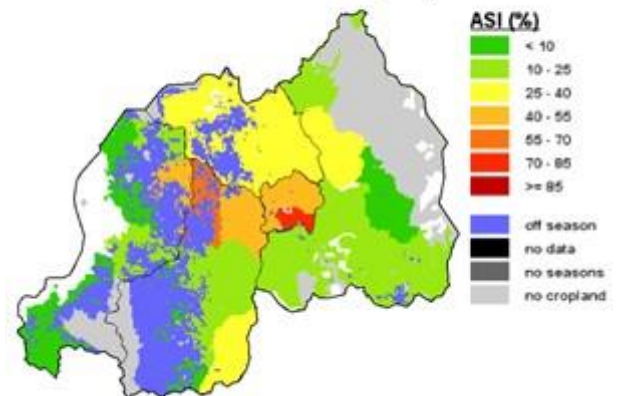
Growing

Harvesting

Source: FAO/GIEWS.

Rwanda - Agricultural Stress Index (ASI)

from start of season 1 to Dekad 2, May 2020



Source: FAO/GIEWS Earth Observation System.

characterized by exceptionally abundant precipitation, which benefited yields. In addition, free distributions by the Government and subsidized sales of seeds, fertilizers and other agricultural inputs allowed for an expansion of planted area. As a result, despite some crop losses due to flooding and landslides, the cereal output was estimated at record levels. By contrast, the torrential rains affected the output of beans and potatoes, important staples in the country's diet and particularly vulnerable to excessive moisture.

According to official estimates, the "2020A" season maize production is put at a record 454 500 tonnes, 10 percent above the average of the previous five years. Similarly, the output of cassava was 15 percent above the average of the previous five years. Production of potatoes (sweet and Irish potatoes) and beans, affected by excess moisture, was by 7-10 percent below the "2019A" season output, but still above average.

The 2020 aggregate cereal production is tentatively forecast at about 751 000 tonnes, about 10 percent above the average of the previous five years.

The harvest of the minor "2020C" season crops, mainly tubers and vegetables, will start in September in marshlands and irrigated areas. According to the latest Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forum (GHACOF) weather forecast, above-average precipitations are expected between June and September, with a favourable impact on yields.

Prices of maize and beans declined below year-earlier levels in recent months

In the capital, Kigali, wholesale prices of beans and maize reached record levels in December 2019 as seasonal patterns were compounded by increased transport costs and trade disruptions caused by torrential rains. Subsequently, prices declined by about 25-30 percent between December 2019 and February 2020 as the commercialization of the "2020" A season harvest increased supplies. Some increases were observed in March and April due to food supply chains and panic buying related to the COVID-19 pandemic, but prices of maize and beans resumed their downward trend in May, when they were about 5 and 10 percent, respectively, below their year-earlier levels. Prices of maize followed similar trends in Ruhengeri market, located in the Northern Province, where they substantially declined between December 2019 and March 2020, increased in April and resumed their downward trend in May, when they were slightly lower than 12 months earlier.

Food security situation in urban areas affected by measures to contain spread of COVID-19 pandemic

The country is generally food secure and the restrictive measures introduced to contain the spread of the COVID-19 outbreak (see Box below) did not have a major impact on employment opportunities and incomes in most rural areas. In the areas affected by floods and landslides, humanitarian assistance provided by the Government is maintaining stable and adequate food security conditions for the vulnerable households. Only some households, which have been severely affected by floods, are facing IPC Phase 2: "Stressed" levels of food insecurity.

In urban areas, the lockdown measures significantly affected the food security situation of the poor households, which mainly rely

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Cereal Production

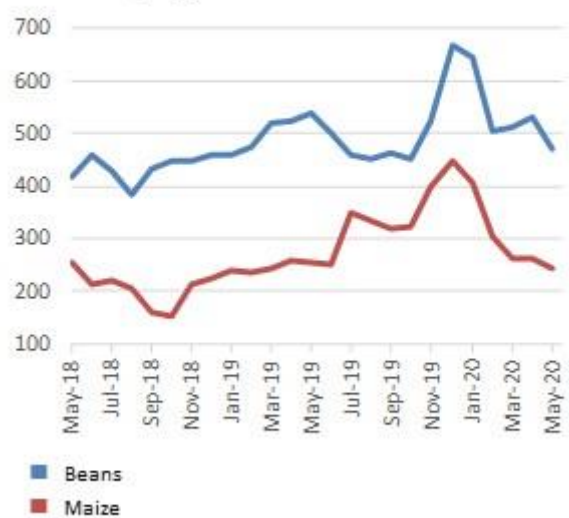
	2015-2019 average	2019	2020 forecast	change 2020/2019
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	400	421	437	3.7
Sorghum	154	160	155	-3.1
Rice (paddy)	115	132	140	6.4
Others	16	20	19	-1.5
Total	685	732	751	2.6

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet.

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Selected food prices in Kigali

Rwanda Franc per kg



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

on daily wages obtained through casual labour, petty trading, food vending, construction activities and domestic work. Due to a sharp decline in incomes, IPC Phase 2: “Stressed” levels of food insecurity are prevailing among them. Despite the recent phasing out of some restrictive measures, the economic recovery is likely to be slow and the food security situation of the urban poor is expected to remain at IPC Phase 2: “Stressed” level at least until July/August.

According to the UNHCR, as of end-May 2020, the country hosted about 149 000 refugees and asylum seekers, 73 000 from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and 76 000 from Burundi. About 90 percent of the refugees live in camps, where they are provided with basic services, cash transfers and food and nutrition assistance, keeping their food security situation stable at IPC Phase 1: “Minimal” levels. By contrast, the food security situation of about 11 500 refugees living in Kigali City has deteriorated to IPC Phase 2: “Stressed” levels, as they do not receive humanitarian assistance and the restrictive measures have affected both incomes and remittances.

COVID-19 and measures adopted by the Government

In March and April 2020, the Government introduced several precautionary measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- The suspension of travel between cities and districts.
- The obligation for all citizens to stay indoors, unless movement is essential.
- Work-at-home orders for all employees, except for those providing essential services.
- The obligation to wear face masks in public and in multi-family compounds.
- The suspension of all international flights, except for cargo and emergency flights.
- The closure of all land borders, except for returning Rwandan nationals and legal residents, and cargo trucks.
- The introduction, in cooperation with Kenya, Uganda and South Sudan, of a digital surveillance and tracking system to monitor cargo truck drivers engaged in cross-border transport activities.
- The obligation for restaurants and cafes to provide only take-away and delivery services.
- The obligation for bars to close at 21:00 hours in Kigali and other cities, and at 19:00 hours in rural areas.
- The closure of all shops and markets selling non-essential items.
- The closure of all schools, universities and places of worship.
- The prohibition of concerts, exhibitions, festivals, open-days, marching events and other unnecessary gatherings.

To mitigate the economic impact of these measures, especially on the vulnerable households, the Government introduced:

- The distribution of food aid to 20 000 beneficiaries in the capital, Kigali.
- Fixed prices for 17 food items, including rice, sugar and cooking oil.

Beginning from May 2020, some restrictive measures have been phased out. For example, public administration services and private businesses have been allowed to resume their activities, abiding to strict health and safety measures.

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