

SPECIAL REPORT

FAO/WFP CROP AND FOOD SUPPLY ASSESSMENT MISSION TO HAITI

12 January 2005

Mission Highlights

- Despite dry weather conditions in the North-West and localized floods during the months of May and September, rainfall has been adequate in quantity and well distributed.
- Cereal production for 2004 is forecast at 395 000 tonnes, about 9 percent above last year production and 6.5 percent above last five-year average. Maize production increased substantially, while rice yields and area planted continued to decline due to insufficient maintenance of the irrigation systems, lack of man power and low utilization of chemical inputs.
- At the end of September, tropical storm Jeanne hit the northern departments of Artibonite and North-West, causing loss of human lives and extensive damages to urban infrastructure and to banana and vegetables crops. Paddy and sorghum crops reported only minor losses.
- The deplorable status of several roads and the insecurity that is characterizing the country since the start of the political crisis are seriously affecting the transport of food crops from producing areas to main urban markets. As a consequence of this market fragmentation, food prices show significant differences among regions.
- Cereal import requirement in the 2004/05 marketing year (July/June) is estimated at about 544 000 tonnes, very similar to previous year, of which 437 000 tonnes are expected to be imported commercially, including some quantities of rice and maize of informal imports from the Dominican Republic.
- With about 78 000 tonnes of food aid already received and distributed, the cereal uncovered deficit is estimated at 36 000 tonnes.

1. OVERVIEW

An FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission visited Haiti from 4 to 22 October 2004 to estimate cereal production in 2004 and forecast cereal import requirements marketing year (July/June). Officials of the Ministry of Agriculture assisted Mission's work in the capital as well as in the field. In particular, the national agency on food security, called 'Coordination nationale de la sécurité alimentaire' (CNSA), actively participated in the desk and field work, providing detailed information about current and future food situation.

During the period spent in the capital, the Mission interviewed staff of the CNSA, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Economics and Finance, the Ministry of Education, the European Commission, the UN and other international and bilateral organizations as well as several NGOs. At the same time, the Mission collected data and documentation at national and departmental level on recent macroeconomic indicators, baseline studies on food security, weather conditions during the 2004 agricultural seasons and periodical early warning bulletins. This information was complemented during the field work, with interviews to staff of the 'Directions départementales agricoles' (DDA) of the Ministry of Agriculture, extension officers, agronomists, farmers, community leaders, staff of local and international NGOs, hospitals, schools and donor development projects.

After initial briefing, the Mission worked closely with CNSA staff that undertook about one hundred and sixty interviews with farmers in nine geographical departments. The Mission organised a half-a-day training for CNSA representatives of each geographical department in order to discuss the questionnaire to be used for the interviews in the field. Then, during 11 days, the Mission visited six departments, namely West, South-East, South, Artibonite, Centre and North. The Mission travelled extensively in the field to observe and



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evaluate standing crops; discussions were held with farmers concerning their experience and assessment of the 2004 first cropping season (from March/April to June/July) and their perception of the current second season (from August/September to November/December) and the levels of food security. Markets were visited to observe the availability of commodities and the current prices. Unfortunately, the recent deterioration of the security situation in some parts of Port-au-Prince prevented the Mission from visiting the main private cereal traders. However, the Mission travelled up to the border with the Dominican Republic to discuss with local people about the informal trade that takes place along the frontier.

In 2004, the first rainy season started in March in the southern departments and then moved to the North. During both seasons, rains were well distributed and adequate in quantity in most of the producing areas, with positive effects on planted area and yields especially of maize crop. However, this year has been characterized by two major flooding with loss of human lives and serious consequences to urban and rural infrastructures, crops and livestock. The first inundation occurred during the first season at the end of May and affected the surroundings of the city of Mapou in the South-East Department, close to the border with the Dominican Republic, and the city of Fond-Verrettes in the West Department. The second meteorological event took place during the hurricane season, at the end of September, when the tropical storm Jeanne strongly hit the city of Gonaïves in the Artibonite Department and the Vallée des Trois Rivières in the North-West Department. Both floods caused localized crop losses, mainly on bananas and vegetables and less to paddy and sorghum crops, increasing food insecurity of local population. The death toll of both disasters was very high, accounting to about 5 000 persons.

National cereal production (maize, sorghum, millet and rice) in 2004 has been estimated by the Mission at 395 000 tonnes, about 8 percent higher than previous year and 6 percent higher than last five-year average. Maize crop production is estimated at 240 000 tonnes, 17.5 percent up on 2003. This increase is mainly the consequence of the major area planted following good prices in 2003 and the positive effects on yields of the good 2004 rainy seasons. By contrast, the paddy crop is estimated 10 percent lower than last year at 64 000 tonnes (milled), due to low yields as a consequence of inadequate maintenance of the irrigation systems. Sorghum/millet output also decreased 4.4 percent at 91 000 tonnes.

Production of pulse crops, the main source of proteins in local diet, is estimated at 62 000 tonnes, about 8 percent lower than 2003, mainly as a consequence of the negative impact of excessive rains following the hurricane Ivan and the tropical storm Jeanne during the second season crops (planted in August) in the highlands in southern departments. By contrast, abundant rains benefited production of tubers, such as cassava, sweet potato and yams. Industrial crops as coffee and sugar cane are undergoing a continuous decline as response to low prices and are being frequently substituted with pulses on the highlands and with paddy in irrigated plains.

Food prices normally fluctuate along the year, with lower levels at the arrival of the new crop and gradually increasing until the harvest of the next crop. However, at the time of the Mission, production prices of paddy and sorghum increased in 2004 compared to the same period last year, but the price of maize declined. The reduction of maize price, from 20 to 50 percent in different departments, is mainly the result of the production surplus in many areas of the country and the security problems that are impeding transportation of goods to principal urban markets, mainly to the capital Port-au-Prince, where food consumer prices are reported to be rising.

Total cereal import requirements in 2004/05 marketing year (July/June) are estimated at 544 000 tonnes, nearly 60 percent of total utilization, comprising 250 000 tonnes of rice, 287 000 tonnes of wheat and wheat flour and 7 000 tonnes of maize. It is estimated that about 437 000 tonnes of cereals will be commercially procured, including some quantities of rice and maize of informal trade along the border with the Dominican Republic. Cereal uncovered deficit in marketing year 2004/05 is expected to be about 103 000 tonnes.

This report has been prepared by Mario Zappacosta, Joseph Wilner Alix and René Grojean, under the responsibility of the FAO and WFP Secretariats with information from official and other sources. Since conditions may change rapidly, please contact the undersigned for further information if required.

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