

SPECIAL REPORT

SRI LANKA

UPDATE ON DROUGHT CONDITIONS FOR 2003/04 MAHA AND 2004 YALA SEASONS

10 December 2004

Highlights

- There has been a significant reduction in the cultivated area of both irrigated as well as rainfed crops for 2004 Yala season due to the failure of the rains. The drought situation was much worse than the forecast by CFSAM in March. Compared to the previous year, the 2004 Yala paddy output is reduced by 84 percent in Anuradhapura, 66 percent in Kurunegala, and 46 percent in Puttalam.
- The damage to Yala paddy production in Agrarian Service Centres (ASCs) located in dry zone is much higher. On average, more than 90 percent of Yala paddy areas were abandoned in 12 ASCs in dry zone of Kurunegala district and the areas in 5 ASCs were totally lost. The Yala production in all ASCs in the dry zone of Puttalam district was reported totally lost.
- Nationally, the 2004 Yala paddy output is estimated at about 799 000 tonnes and revised downward 9 percent from the CFSAM forecast. The estimated production is 28.4 percent below the previous five-year average and 32.1 percent lower than that of last year.
- The 2003/04 Maha production is revised up to 1 669.7 thousand tonnes, about 2 percent higher than the CFSAM estimated in March, reflecting higher yields achieved.
- The revised overall total paddy production in 2004 (the sum of the 2003/04 Maha and the 2004 Yala) is at 2.47 million tonnes, 41 000 tonnes or 1.7 percent below that estimated in March and some 20 percent below paddy production in 2003.
- Total rice and wheat import requirement including food aid is raised up from 1.39 million tonnes estimated in March to 1.42 million tonnes, based on the revised production.
- The two severe consecutive seasons in Anuradhapura, Kurunegala, and Puttalam, especially in ASCs located in dry zone have caused severe food insecurity and input shortage for 2004/05 Maha paddy production. Lower incomes and rising prices of essential commodities further aggravated the food insecurity.
- Assistance has been provided by WFP and FAO to the farming families in the most seriously affected ASCs in three districts after the CFSAM mission.

1. OVERVIEW

Sri Lanka, especially in the dry-zone areas, has experienced a prolonged drought stemming from reduced rainfall levels since the beginning of the 2003/04 Maha season from September 2003. Following a request of the Government of Sri Lanka, a FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission (CFSAM) visited the country from 7 to 24 March 2004 to assess the 2003/04 Maha harvest and to forecast 2004 Yala production in order to estimate cereal import requirements for 2004/05 marketing year including anticipated food aid needs.

The findings of the CFSAM mission in March revealed that failure of the rainfall, characterized as low and erratic during Maha 2003/04 season resulted in a reduction of paddy production, when compared with the previous year. Of the districts affected, Kurunegala, Anuradhapura, and Puttalam are the worst hit districts for Maha crops. Further, it was revealed that reduced availability of water in the major irrigation schemes in Kurunegala, Puttalam and Anuradhapura and in other districts might cause a significant reduction in the Yala crop of 2004.

Since March, the beginning of the Yala season (April to September 2004), drought conditions have worsened. 2004 Yala crops were reportedly affected seriously by the prolonged drought. Recently, GIEWS staff and a FAO National consultant (Dr. Fernando) visited the most affected three districts to update the



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drought impact on Maha and Yala production and discussed the food security situation with local WFP staff in the field. The purpose of this report is to provide the updated information regarding the drought situation and its impact on Yala crop production, especially in three most affected districts; update country's 2003/04 Maha paddy production, total 2004 paddy production, and balance sheet for rice and wheat supply and demand situation for 2004/05; and review the food security situation.

The Mission interviewed the government officials in the districts and Agrarian Service Centres, and the farmers in the fields to gather first hand information. The Mission visited the WFP Food-for-Work projects, the rehabilitated small tanks. The Mission also collected information from central government officials in Colombo on rainfall, water availability, and crop production on the national level.

2. DROUGHT SITUATION AND ESTIMATED 2004 YALA SEASON PRODUCTION

2.1 Rainfall and water availability and during 2004 Yala season in Anuradhapura, Kurunegala, and Puttalam

Sri Lanka is categorized as three agro-ecological zones- the wet zone, the intermediate zone and the dry zone. Sixty-four per cent (64 percent) of the island falls under the dry zone, which receives less than 1,800 mm of rainfall per year during both the south-western (smaller Yala season) and the north-eastern (Maha season) monsoon periods. With fewer irrigation schemes, rain-dependent agriculture in dry zones obliges vulnerable people to suffer from the vagaries of weather. During the 2003/04, the impact of drought on crop production in dry zone was more severe than in wet and intermediate zones. Among the three districts visited, all agrarian service centres in Anuradhapura are in the dry zone. Some agrarian service centres in Kurunegala and Puttalam are categorized as dry zone, but the others are in intermediate zone.

Rainfall during the 2003/04 Maha season was low and erratic compared with that of the normal season. Rainfall levels well below the 50-year averages were recorded for each month from September 2003 to February 2004 for the North-western and Central Provinces, as reported by CFSAM in March.

Since the beginning of the Yala season (from April to September 2004), precipitation has continued to be lower than normal and drought conditions have become worse. As shown in Figures below, the observed cumulative rainfall by the end of August registered 1012 millimetres (mm) in Anuradhapura district, 912 mm in Kurunegala District, and Puttalam District. They are 48 percent, 42 percent, and 38 percent, respectively, below last year's level.

As a result of the reduced rainfall, water level and storage in major tanks were extremely low in three districts as reported in Table 1. Some tanks were seriously depleted after the year-long prolonged drought. As of 16 September, the average effective storage was only 5.6 percent in Anuradhapura, 14 percent in Kurunegala, and 10.4 percent in Puttalam.

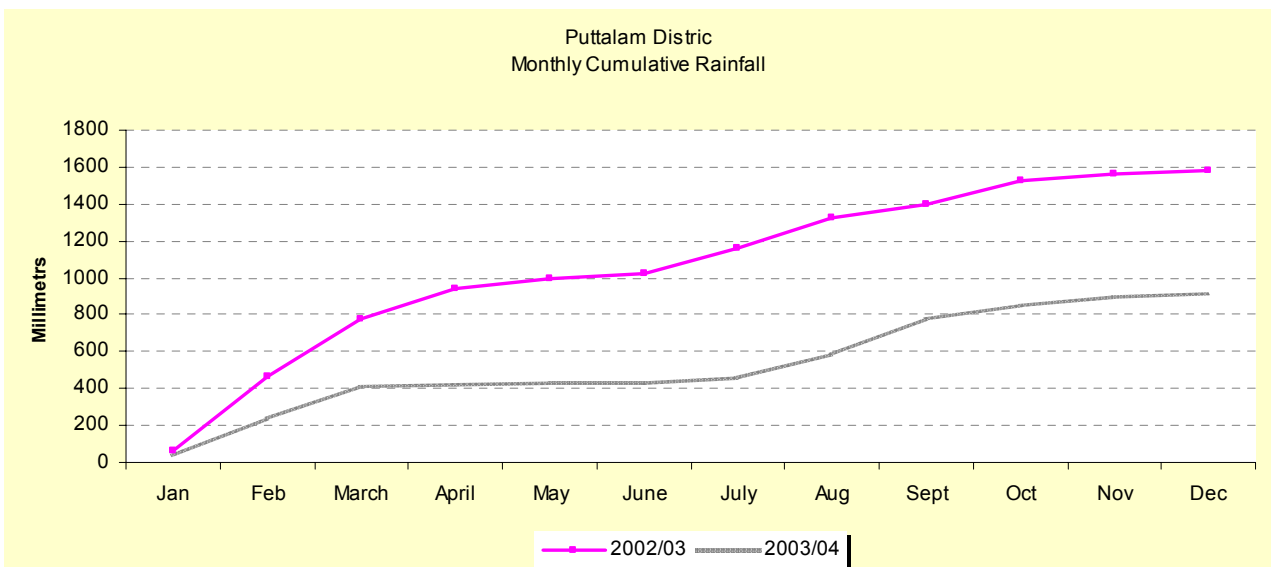
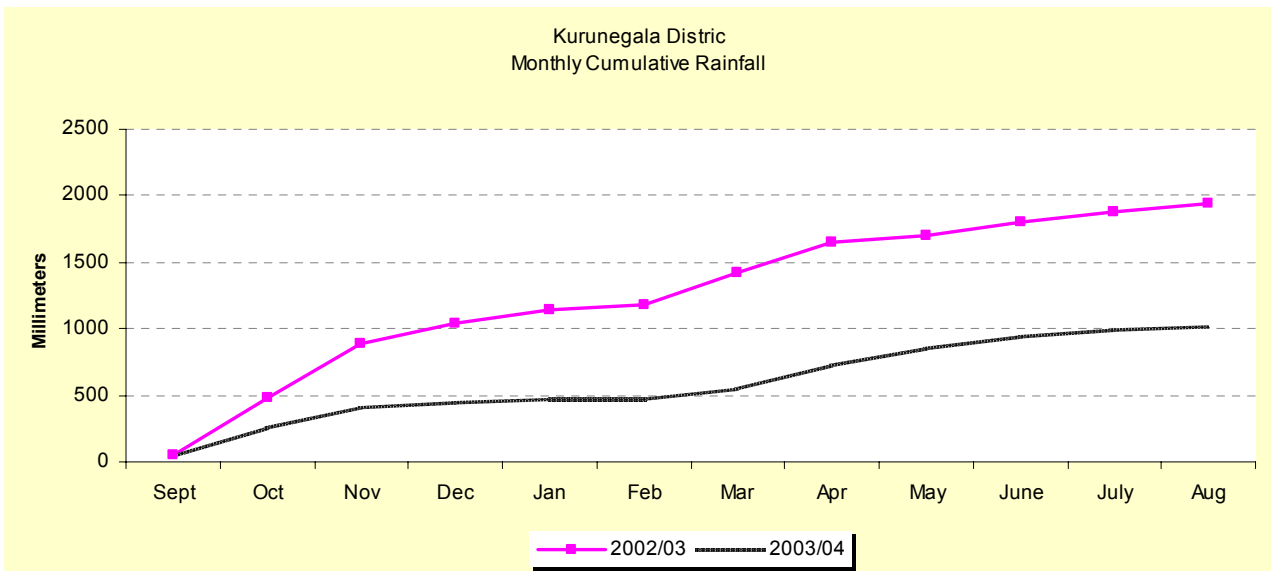
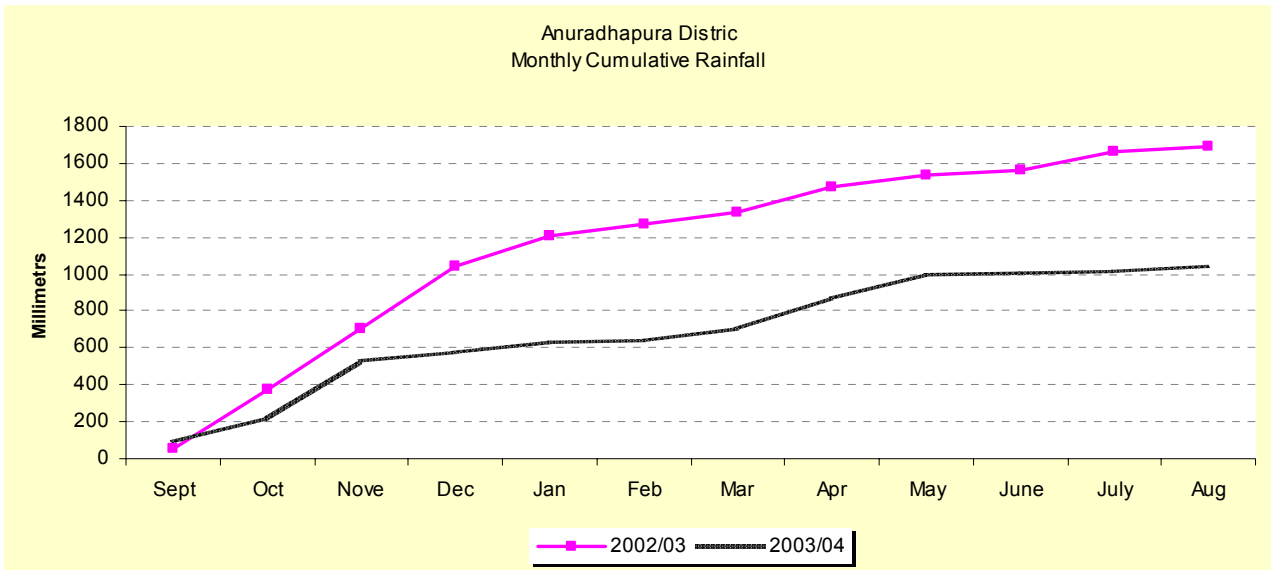


Table 1: Water level and storage of major reservoirs in Anuradapura, Kurunegala, and Puttalam as of 16 September 2004

District/Reservoir	Gross Extent	Gross Capacity	Effective Storage	
	Acres	Acft	Acft	Percent
Anuradapura District	63 433	419 890	22 647	5.6
Basawakkulama	1 788	1 900	205	10.8
Huruluwewa	10 000	55 000	6 500	12.3
Mahakandarawa	6 000	36 250	-3 300	-10.2
Mahawilachchiya	2 700	32 500	2 375	7.5
Nachchaduwa	6 275	45 140	7 890	17.5
Nuwara Wewa	2 400	36 000	2 620	7.5
Padaviya	13 800	85 000	1 480	1.8
Rajangana	17 500	81 600	2 515	3.3
Tissa Wewa	970	3 500	1 070	33.0
Wahalkada	2 000	43 000	1 292	3.2
Kurunegala District	24 703	78 963	10 231	14.1
Ambakolawewa	840	6 700	365	5.7
Attaragallawa	1 036	3 668	-240	-7.6
Batalagoda	6 030	4 840	531	11.3
Hakwatuna	5 060	19 727	3 858	23.1
Kimbulwana	1 664	6 900	414	6.4
Magalla	6 000	7 440	1 515	20.6
Palukadawala	2 023	7 688	1 318	17.2
Usgala Siyabalan	2 050	22 000	2 470	12.1
Puttalam District	7 319	73 835	7 198	10.4
Inginimitiya	5 226	58 835	4 946	9.1
Tabbowa	2 093	15 000	2 252	15.2

2.2 2004 paddy production during Yala season in Anuradhapura, Kurunegala, and Puttalam

As major tanks in Kurunegala, Anuradhapura, and Puttalam were seriously depleted, many farmers suffered two successive crop failures. Large areas of paddy land were unplanted due to insufficient water supply in the irrigation tanks.

In Anuradhapura, with the whole district belonging to dry zone, the 2004 Yala crop was the worst-hit by drought at the district level. The area achieved for Yala paddy is estimated at 3 460 hectares, a decrease of 84 percent from the previous year. The Yala paddy production is estimated at some 10 760 tonnes, about 84 percent below that of the previous year. The brunt of the decline in productivity was borne by farmers using major and minor irrigation tanks for Yala crop production.

Compared with that of Anuradhapura, overall Yala crop situations at the district level in Kurunegala and Puttalam were slightly better. The total 2004 Yala areas are estimated at 18 590 hectares in the former and 6 010 hectares in the latter, 65 percent and 44 percent, respectively, reduction from the previous year; while the total 2004 Yala paddy production are estimated at 57 520 tonnes in the former district and 15 180 tonnes in the latter, 66 percent and 46 percent, respectively, reduced from the previous year.

However, the impact of drought on ASCs located in dry zone in these two districts is not different from that in Anuradhapura. 2004 Yala production area in ASCs located in Dry Zone are reported in Tables 2 and 3. More than 90 percent production located in the centres of dry zone of Kurunegala was lost based on the average of all 12 centres. Of them, five ASCs lost all Yala paddy production. In Puttalam district, all Yala production in all 10 agrarian service centres was also totally lost.

Similar to paddy, the areas for other crops in these centres were reduced considerably and resulted in almost no production in some areas.

Table 2: Harvested paddy area (ha) in Yala season in Agrarian Service Centres of dry zone in Kurunegala district

Agrarian Service Centre in Dry Zone	2003 Yala	2004 Yala	Percent of 2004 over 2003
Maho	699	0	0.0
Nagollagama	1 497	0	0.0
Galgamuwa	2 063	85	4.1
Ehetuwewa	1 545	0	0.0
Mahananneriya	573	40	7.0
Nikawertiya	2 253	1 173	52.1
Divullegoda	625	4	0.6
Ratnayakepura	1 393	161	11.6
Kotawehera	663	56	8.5
Mahagiriulla	847	102	12.1
Tambutta	4 452	0	0.0
Ambanpola	1 415	0	0.0
Total	18 024	1 621	9.0

Note: Figures may not add-up exactly due to rounding.

Table 3: Harvested paddy area (ha) in Yala season in Agrarian Service Centres of dry zone in Puttalam district

Agrarian Service Centre in Dry Zone	2004 Target	2004 Achieved	Percent of Achieved over Target
Serukele	485	0	0
Mahakumbu	815	0	0
Anamaduwa	800	0	0
Inginimitiya	1 630	0	0
Nawagaththegama	425	0	0
Ih/Puliyankuama	718	0	0
Puth/Thabbowa	1 223	0	0
Wanathawillu	250	0	0
Puttalama	456	0	0
Madurankuliye	282	0	0
Total	7 084	0	0

Note: Figures may not add-up exactly due to rounding.

2.3 Estimated 2004 paddy production during Yala season in Sri Lanka

The Yala crop normally comprises 35 percent of the volume of the total paddy crop in Sri Lanka and the mean annual production for 1998–2003 was some 1.12 million tonnes. This crop is usually produced using irrigation water from major and minor tanks usually.

The 2004 Yala paddy areas, yield, and production for whole country were estimated based on the information collected from the Government of Sri Lanka in Colombo. The estimated results with the comparison to the 2003 crop and the average of the previous five years are reported in Table 4. The total area harvested for Yala paddy is estimated at 236 320 tonnes, 32.8 percent below last year and 26.9 percent below the average of the last 5 years. The total Yala paddy production is estimated at 798 990 tonnes, 32.1 percent lower than the previous year and 28.4 percent below the average of five years, reflecting the lower area harvested and low yield achieved. The estimated area and production are 12 percent and 9 percent below the CFSAM forecast in March reflecting the fact that the drought situation during 2004 Yala season was much worse than expected.

Table 4: Newly estimated 2004 Yala season paddy production, in comparison with last year and the average of the previous 5 years

District	Area Harvested			Yield			Production		
	2004 ('000 ha)	2004 (percent change from 2003)	2004 (percent change from average)	2004 (tonnes/ha)	2004 (percent change from 2003)	2004 (percent change from average)	2004 ('000 tonnes)	2004 (percent change from 2003)	2004 (percent change from average)
Colombo	0.8	-50.5	-54.8	1.97	-1.5	-9.1	1.6	-51.1	-58.7
Gampaha	1.1	-75.2	-57.7	2.10	0.3	-11.8	2.3	-75.1	-62.4
Kalutara	9.9	-8.6	-19.6	2.19	-0.3	-7.3	21.5	-8.6	-25.6
Galle	6.1	-42.3	-43.0	2.02	-1.1	-1.7	12.3	-42.8	-44.0
Matara	14.0	4.6	-3.5	2.44	9.8	-6.4	34.2	14.8	-10.4
Ratnapura	10.5	-0.6	-8.0	2.41	9.8	-4.8	25.2	9.1	-12.5
Kegalle	6.5	-17.4	-6.8	2.90	1.4	1.7	18.8	-16.1	-5.8
Kurunegala	18.6	-65.4	-51.7	3.09	-2.4	-3.2	57.5	-66.2	-53.5
Puttalam	6.0	-44.1	-24.1	2.63	-4.1	-10.0	15.8	-46.4	-30.8
Kandy	8.9	-8.4	-9.1	2.69	1.5	-3.5	23.8	-7.9	-12.4
Matale	3.4	-48.0	-46.2	3.25	-1.4	-0.8	10.9	-48.8	-46.6
Nuwara Eliya	1.6	-11.6	-25.4	1.89	0.1	-3.0	2.9	-11.5	-27.7
Badulla	9.8	-10.8	-3.4	3.07	-13.5	-15.0	30.2	-22.9	-18.1
Monaragala	5.3	-15.6	9.9	2.53	-27.7	-32.0	13.3	-39.1	-24.6
Jaffna	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Killinochchi	3.3	3.4	-17.1	2.97	0.4	12.7	9.7	3.4	-4.3
Vavuniya	0.1	-86.3	-87.6	3.38	-2.9	6.3	0.4	-86.5	-86.6
Mullativu	2.6	48.8	37.1	3.65	2.5	28.0	9.3	51.7	76.2
Mannar	0.2	-60.7	-74.6	2.22	-13.7	-13.5	0.4	-66.1	-78.2
Anuradhapura	3.5	-84.0	-80.7	3.11	-0.6	-7.7	10.8	-84.1	-82.1
Polonnaruwa	36.6	-21.5	-20.9	3.88	-2.1	-4.0	141.8	-23.1	-24.2
Trincomalee	7.1	-44.6	-41.2	5.24	35.3	39.5	37.3	-25.0	-17.9
Batticaloa	15.6	-17.2	-0.5	2.96	0.9	-0.7	46.1	-16.5	-1.2
Ampara	41.7	-19.6	-20.8	4.19	-2.3	-4.2	174.4	-21.5	-24.1
Hambantota	12.3	-33.5	-22.7	3.83	16.7	6.5	47.0	-22.5	-16.1
Udawalawe	8.2	-3.5	-1.5	4.80	0.3	0.0	39.3	-3.1	-1.6
Mahaweli	3.1	-62.5	-59.2	3.93	-0.2	0.6	12.2	-62.6	-59.2
Sri Lanka	236.3	-32.8	-26.9	3.38	1.1	-2	799.0	-32.1	-28.4

Note: Figures may not add-up exactly due to rounding.

3. REVISED 2003/04 MAHA SEASON PADDY PRODUCTION AND TOTAL 2004 PADDY PRODUCTION

The Government of Sri Lanka (DCS) has officially made an official estimate of the 2003/04 Maha season paddy production. The revised 2003/04 Maha paddy production for Sri Lanka at the district level with comparison to last year's level and the average of the previous 5 years is presented in Table 5. The revised 2003/04 Maha production is at 1 669.7 thousand tonnes which is about 2 percent higher than the March estimate, mainly due to the higher yield achieved than the earlier estimate. The revised 2003/04 Maha paddy production is 12 percent and 5.2 percent below those in the previous year and the average of the previous 5 years.

Table 6 provides the revised overall total paddy production in 2004 (the sum of the 2003/04 Maha and the 2004 Yala seasons), which is estimated at 2.47 million tonnes, 41 000 tonnes or 1.7 percent below that estimated in March. Based on this revised data, total paddy production in 2004 is about 20 percent below last year and about 14 percent below the average of the previous five years.

Table 5: Revised 2003/04 Maha season paddy production, in comparison with last year and the average of the previous 5 years

District	Area Harvested			Yield			Production		
	2003/04 (‘000 ha)	2003/04 (percent change from 2002/03)	2003/04 (percent change from average)	2003/04 (tonnes/ ha)	2003/04 (percent change from 2002/03)	2003/04 (percent change from average)	2003/04 (‘000 tonnes)	2003/04 (percent change from 2002/03)	2003/04 (percent change from average)
Colombo	4.4	-0.4	-1.8	3.03	8.7	4.5	13.4	8.2	2.6
Gampaha	9.5	-4.7	-3.3	2.76	-0.5	-0.5	26.3	-5.1	-3.7
Kalutara	13.4	-0.1	-9.2	2.24	-2.2	-14.7	30.0	-2.3	-22.8
Galle	13.3	-14.3	-17.5	2.65	-1.7	5.2	35.3	-15.7	-13.1
Matara	13.8	-1.4	-14.1	3.00	7.9	7.5	41.4	6.3	-7.5
Ratnapura	12.6	-0.6	-12.0	2.55	-2.8	-7.1	32.2	-3.3	-18.2
Kegalle	7.0	-19.4	-21.3	3.03	-5.7	-12.7	21.1	-24.0	-31.1
Kurunegala	20.8	-67.7	-65.1	3.61	2.3	3.4	75.0	-67.0	-63.9
Puttalam	7.2	-52.6	-28.3	3.13	18.3	10.3	22.5	-44.0	-19.8
Kandy	12.7	-8.7	-16.5	2.87	1.8	1.3	36.4	-7.1	-15.4
Matale	13.7	-11.9	-0.8	3.71	-0.9	1.7	50.9	-12.8	1.0
Nuwara Eliya	5.1	-9.3	-17.2	1.87	10.5	0.4	9.5	0.2	-16.9
Badulla	21.0	-1.1	-0.3	3.68	14.6	7.2	77.2	13.3	6.8
Monaragala	14.6	0.2	13.6	3.98	5.9	5.6	58.4	6.1	20.3
Jaffna	7.1	10.1	17.8	1.79	-42.2	-30.3	12.7	-36.3	-18.5
Killinochchi	16.6	85.5	118.8	3.02	3.7	37.7	50.0	92.4	213.6
Vavuniya	8.0	2.3	25.9	3.49	1.1	7.8	27.9	3.4	35.3
Mullativu	6.9	-28.6	18.0	3.75	33.9	49.1	25.8	-4.4	74.0
Mannar	6.0	-27.2	2.6	3.92	-4.3	23.0	23.7	-30.3	24.6
Anuradhapura	28.0	-55.4	-45.7	3.64	4.2	3.5	101.8	-53.5	-43.7
Polonnaruwa	51.3	2.8	5.1	4.44	12.4	10.0	227.7	15.6	15.5
Trincomalee	24.4	-2.7	8.8	3.70	14.5	14.4	90.3	11.5	24.3
Batticaloa	45.5	2.6	20.6	2.48	9.0	-0.7	113.0	11.8	20.4
Ampara	56.0	-1.3	1.0	4.45	10.2	11.3	249.0	8.7	12.3
Hambantota	16.6	2.4	-4.7	4.04	1.1	2.6	67.3	3.5	-1.1
Udawalawe	8.5	-4.9	14.1	4.94	-2.2	0.9	41.8	-7.1	13.5
Mahawelih	24.9	-1.9	1.3	4.39	-4.1	-3.5	109.1	-5.9	-2.3
Sri Lanka	468.8	-16.2	-9.6	3.56	5.1	4.8	1 669.7	-12.0	-5.2

Note: Figures may not add-up exactly due to rounding.

Table 6: Revised 2004 total paddy production (sum of 2003/04 Maha and 2004 Yala), in comparison with last year and the average of the previous 5 years

District	Area Harvested			Yield			Production		
	2003/04 ('000 ha)	2003/04 (change from 2002/03)	2003/04 (change from average)	2003/04 (tonnes/ha)	2003/04 (change from 2002/03)	2003/04 (change from average)	2003/04 ('000 tonnes)	2003/04 (change from 2002/03)	2003/04 (change from average)
Colombo	5.2	-14.0	-17.0	2.87	11.3	6.6	15.0	-4.2	-11.5
Gampaha	10.6	-26.2	-14.6	2.69	4.9	0.3	28.6	-22.6	-14.4
Kalutara	23.2	-3.9	-13.9	2.22	-1.2	-11.7	51.5	-5.1	-24.0
Galle	19.5	-25.6	-27.7	2.45	1.0	5.1	47.6	-24.9	-24.0
Matara	27.8	1.5	-9.0	2.72	8.3	0.2	75.6	10.0	-8.9
Ratnapura	23.1	-0.6	-10.2	2.49	2.4	-6.2	57.4	1.8	-15.8
Kegalle	13.4	-18.5	-14.9	2.97	-2.4	-7.2	39.8	-20.5	-21.1
Kurunegala	39.4	-66.7	-59.9	3.37	0.0	-0.2	132.5	-66.7	-60.0
Puttalam	13.2	-49.1	-26.5	2.90	8.0	2.3	38.3	-45.0	-24.8
Kandy	21.6	-8.6	-13.6	2.80	1.3	-0.7	60.2	-7.4	-14.2
Matale	17.0	-22.5	-14.9	3.62	0.2	2.6	61.7	-22.4	-12.7
Nuwara Eliya	6.6	-9.9	-19.2	1.88	7.8	-0.6	12.4	-2.8	-19.7
Badulla	30.8	-4.4	-1.3	3.48	4.7	-0.2	107.4	0.1	-1.6
Monaragala	19.9	-4.5	12.6	3.60	-2.4	-3.8	71.7	-6.7	8.3
Jaffna	7.1	10.1	17.8	1.79	-42.2	-30.8	12.7	-36.3	-18.5
Killinochchi	19.9	64.0	72.2	3.01	2.9	32.7	59.8	68.7	128.6
Vavuniya	8.1	-5.7	12.4	3.49	1.2	7.9	28.3	-4.6	21.3
Mullativu	9.4	-16.9	22.6	3.72	27.6	42.4	35.1	6.0	74.5
Mannar	6.3	-29.1	-6.5	3.86	-3.6	22.7	24.1	-31.7	14.8
Anuradhapura	31.5	-62.8	-54.7	3.58	5.4	3.2	112.5	-60.8	-53.3
Polonnaruwa	87.9	-8.9	-7.6	4.21	6.4	4.1	369.5	-3.1	-3.8
Trincomalee	31.5	-16.9	-8.7	4.05	17.4	18.4	127.6	-2.4	8.1
Batticaloa	61.1	-3.3	14.4	2.61	5.3	-1.0	159.1	1.8	13.2
Ampara	97.6	-10.0	-9.6	4.34	4.3	3.7	423.4	-6.1	-6.2
Hambantota	28.9	-16.7	-13.3	3.95	9.3	6.2	114.3	-9.0	-7.9
Udawalawe	16.6	-4.2	5.9	4.87	-1.0	-0.2	81.1	-5.2	5.6
Mahaweli	28.0	-16.8	-13.1	4.34	-1.9	-1.4	121.3	-18.4	-14.3
Sri Lanka	705.1	-22.6	-16.4	3.50	3.8	2.7	2 468.7	-19.7	-14.2

Note: Figures may not add-up exactly due to rounding.

4. FOOD SUPPLY AND DEMAND SITUATION IN 2004/05

4.1 Current market situation

Following the failure of Maha and Yala harvests in 2004, there was a large perceived shortage in rice supply in major markets in Sri Lanka. The retail price of rice has increased to about 45 to 50 Rps per kg in September 2004, compared to about 25 Rps in September a year ago.

4.2 Revised cereal supply /demand balance for 2004/05

A revised cereal supply/demand balance sheet for the country for 2004/05 is presented in Table 7. In preparing the balance sheet, the following assumptions were made:

- a midyear population of 19.22 million in 2004, obtained by applying an annual growth rate of 0.8235 percent to the previous year;
- a consumption requirement of 151.46 kg/caput of cereals (rice 98 kg/caput, wheat 50 kg/caput), the same level as in the previous year;
- a seed requirement of 103 kg/ha for paddy;
- post-harvest losses of 6 percent for rice;
- a milling rate of 66 percent from paddy to rice;
- opening stocks of 155 000 tones of rice and 300 000 tonnes of wheat;
- closing stocks of 150 000 tones of rice and 300 000 tonnes of wheat.

Table 7: Revised cereal supply and demand balance, 2004/05 ('000 tonnes)

Item	Rice	Wheat
Domestic availability	1 784	300
Opening stocks	155	300
Production	1 629	0
Maha season	1 102	0
Yala season	527	0
Total utilization	2 223	1 281
Food use	1 884	961
Feed use	0	0
Seed use	90	0
Losses	99	20
Exports	0	0
Closing stocks	150	300
Import requirement (including food aid)	439	981

Note: Figures may not add-up exactly due to rounding.

The total cereal (rice and wheat) import requirement is revised up from last estimated 1.39 million tonnes to 1.42 million tonnes, reflecting the lower total paddy production.

4.3 Emergency assistance to the drought-affected districts of Puttalam, Kurunegala and Anuradhapura

The continuation of drought for two consecutive seasons has caused severe socio-economic problems due to food insecurity, reduced job opportunities and lack of availability of drinking water. The affected families are generally subsistence farmers. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment & Social Welfare (MWESW) has estimated that at present nearly 1.5 million people have been affected by the ongoing drought.

With slowed down economic activities, limited off-farm employment opportunities, and with virtually no farm work at hand for a long time, farmers' incomes have been significantly affected. Lower incomes have affected the purchasing power of the people. The rising prices of essential commodities have further aggravated food insecurity. Many farmers, especially in the most drought-affected areas, totally lack capital to purchase inputs such as seeds, implements, fertilizers etc to start their cultivation in the coming Maha season.

Since the March Mission, some donors have provided funds for WFP and FAO projects to provide relief to the 14 000 most severely affected families in eight Divisional Secretariat Divisions in the Puttalam, Kurunegala and Anuradhapura Districts. WFP under their food-for-work (FFW) programme, has commenced work on restoring the small scale irrigation infrastructure in the selected beneficiary areas. Considerable efforts are being made by World Food Programme to implement improvement projects such as de-silting, bund management, canal clearance and other rehabilitation work under FFW programmes. The Mission has been very impressed with some of these projects, especially after visiting two rehabilitated dams in Puttalam. The FAO project is starting to provide seeds and fertilizer to the neediest 13 640 families.

This report has been prepared by Cheng Fang, under the responsibility of the FAO Secretariat with information from official and other sources. Since conditions may change rapidly, please contact Mr. Henri Josserand, Chief, GIEWS, FAO, Fax: 0039-06-5705-4495, E-mail: giews1@fao.org

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