

End-of-Year Message from the Secretary of the FAO Intergovernmental Group on Grains

December 2012

The year 2012 was a turning point in the work of the FAO Grains Team in that the growing responsibilities in managing the AMIS initiative constituted the core activity of the team. This development, rather than distract the team from delivering on its commitments, actually reinforced its outputs in terms of both effectiveness and quality. In this regard, the team's output included two [Food Outlook](#) reports, the monthly releases of the [FAO Food Price Index](#) and [Cereal Supply and Demand Briefs](#), contributions to four issues of [Crop Prospects and Food Situation](#) reports and, last but not least, collaboration with the OECD in the preparation and publication of the [OECD / FAO Agricultural Outlook](#). In addition, the [Monthly News Report on Grains](#) continued to be circulated without disruption for the eighth consecutive year.

As mentioned in my message of last year, the housing of AMIS in FAO's Trade and Markets Division and the selection of this team as its lead group was expected to increase the responsibilities of the team and also its visibility. AMIS attracted much attention this year as, once again, unfavourable climatic conditions had a strong bearing on global grain supplies. The drought in the United States and the subsequent drop in maize production put the spotlight on AMIS and raised expectations about its relevance throughout the second half of the season. The grains team contributed to various studies and reports produced by AMIS in this period while it also organised all AMIS meetings and events. An important point to highlight is the extent to which AMIS activities are helping the traditional work of the grains team in the area of analysis and data collection. The setting-up of the AMIS database for grains required close bi-lateral exchanges with AMIS participating countries - among the world's leading producers and consumers of grains. This activity has greatly improved the quality of the data used in the analysis by the team, not only for the production of monthly [AMIS Market Monitor](#) reports but also the regular reports such as *Food Outlook*. Furthermore, AMIS has provided a unique opportunity for collaboration with no fewer than nine other international organizations or bodies, which are the members of the AMIS Secretariat. With the International Grains Council joining the Secretariat in October 2012, there is an even greater expectation for further improvements in the work of the grains team in terms of analysis and market information. For a brief review of the work under AMIS you may want to have a glance at the [First Year Progress Report](#) published in October. We would also like to invite you to visit the [AMIS website](#), if you haven't already, and we would be grateful to receive your feedback on the usefulness and relevance of its content.

Looking to 2013, our hope is to be able to continue delivering on both AMIS and regular activities as we have done in 2012. Of course, the work of the team will be influenced also by the market which, in the past few years, has been anything but predictable. This uncertainty is a formidable challenge which can only be met through closer collaboration with all stakeholders, including international organizations and experts from the public and private sectors, which are among the subscribers to the Monthly News Report on Grains.

The FAO Grains Team wishes you all a very healthy and prosperous new year.

Grains Team Core Members:

[Abdolreza Abbassian](#) (senior economist, team leader); [Rita Ashton](#) (AMIS principal administrative assistant and Food Outlook manager); [Ann Berg](#) (senior consultant); [Concepcion Calpe](#) (senior economist and Food Outlook editor); [Claudio Cerquiglini](#) (database manager and senior research assistant); [Valentina Banti](#) (administrative assistant); [David Bedford](#) (research assistant and MNR manager); [Denis Dreschler](#) (AMIS project manager); [Philippe Paquotte](#) (AMIS cereal balance coordinator); [Shirley Mustafa](#) (economist, coordinator of Food Price indices and website manager of World Food Situation); [Fiorella Picchioni](#) (market analyst).