GIEWS Country Brief
Libya

Reference Date: 06-December-2021

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Slightly below-average cereal production harvested in 2021
- Expensive inputs continue to limit agricultural production
- Economic growth recovered but political instability prevails
- People in need of assistance estimated at 1.3 million

Slightly below-average cereal production harvested in 2021

Planting of the 2022 winter grain crops concluded in mid-November. Since the start of the season from September up to mid-November, rainfall amounts in the main producing areas along the coast were above average. Following the ceasefire agreement in October 2020, the security situation in the country improved facilitating farmers’ access to the fields, but risks of military crashes remain. Farmers report that power cuts and high prices of inputs, including seeds, water, fuel, machinery, continue to constrain their ability to cultivate land.

Agricultural production is constrained by geography: only about 12 percent of the total area of 15.4 million hectares is arable. Although 470 000 hectares are suitable for irrigation, only some 240 000 hectares are currently irrigated due to concerns over the depletion of underground water. Cereals are cultivated in the coastal regions, where rainfed production or cropping with supplementary irrigation is possible, and in some arid areas in the south under full irrigation. The most commonly grown vegetables are tomatoes, peppers, onions and leafy greens.

Cereal crop production in 2021 is estimated at 209 000 tonnes, unchanged from the previous year and about 5 percent below the average. The country relies heavily on imports (up to 90 percent) to cover its cereal consumption requirements (mostly wheat and barley) and changes in domestic cereal production have a limited impact on the magnitude of the import requirement. In the 2021/22 marketing year (July/June), the import requirement is projected at 3.2 million tonnes, about the same as in the previous year and close to average.

Cereal Production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>2016-2020 average</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021 estimate</th>
<th>change 2021/2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>000 tonnes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barley</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millet</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Political instability continues to affect economy despite positive growth

After a contraction of over 25 percent year on year in 2020, the economy is forecast to grow by over 60 percent in 2021, driven by strengthening global oil prices, improving political stability and lifting of the domestic oil blockade. The oil blockade was imposed from January to October 2020 by militias aligned with the Libyan National Army, with a detrimental impact on government revenues and national imports. Oil production decreased from 1.1 million barrels per day in 2019 to less than 100,000 barrels in September 2020. In the first half of 2021, oil production returned to the levels of 2019.

In January 2021, the Central Bank devaluated the national currency from about LYD 1.412/USD to LYD 4.48/USD, decreasing the gap between the official and parallel market rates. As of late November 2021, USD 1 sold for LYD 4.64 officially, and LYD 5.04 on the parallel market.

Food security is affected by the dwindling access to food due to high unemployment rates. In the first six months of 2021, the food price inflation averaged about 3 percent, contained by ceiling prices set by the Ministry of Economy. The Ministry of Economy also establishes wholesale prices: in November 2021, the price of 100 kg of flour for bakeries was set at LYD 190, while bakers report buying flour for LYD 227 per quintal from traders due to shortages of flour at subsidized prices.

According to the 2021 Libya Humanitarian Needs Overview, about 1.3 million people (23 percent of the population) are estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance, up from 0.9 million one year earlier. It includes 700,000 people requiring food assistance, a double estimate compared to 2020.

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