



# GIEWS Country Brief Libya

Reference Date: 26-October-2020

### FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Below-average cereal production harvested in 2020
- Insecurity and expensive inputs continue to limit agricultural production
- Political instability affecting economy
- People in need of assistance estimated at 0.9 million but current figures likely to be higher

## Below-average cereal production harvested in 2020

Planting of the 2021 winter grain crops is about to commence and will continue until mid-November. The actual beginning of the planting depends on the level of soil moisture. Seasonal rains started on time in September. However, continued military operations, particularly around Tripoli, are limiting farmers' access to their fields. Farmers also report that power cuts, insecurity as well as expensive inputs, including seeds, water, fuel, tools and machinery, continue to constrain their ability to produce. Restrictions on movement reportedly restricted access of intermediaries to the farms, resulting in depressed farm gate prices and lower farm income.

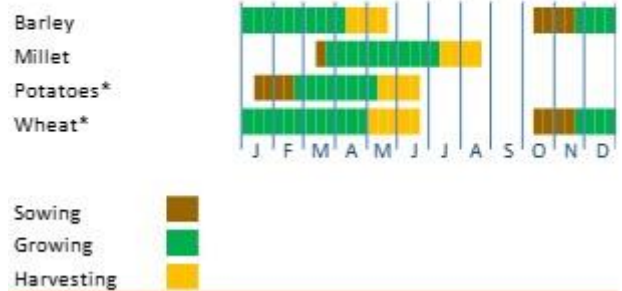
Environmental constraints limit the development of agriculture in the country. About 1.8 million hectares (out of 15.4 million) are arable, out of which 300 000 hectares are covered by fruit and olive trees. Out of 470 000 hectares suitable for irrigation, only some 240 000 hectares are currently irrigated 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.

Although agriculture contributed less than 3 percent to the Gross Domestic Production in 2011 (last information available), over one-fifth of the population is engaged in agricultural activities, often producing crops only for household consumption. Sheep and goats dominate livestock production, mostly in the interior of the country. Livestock producers complain about the lack of veterinary services, vaccines and medicine as well as the high costs of feed and fodder.

## Libya

Crop Calendar

(\*major foodcrop)



Source: FAO/GIEWS.

## Libya

### Cereal Production

	2015-2019	2019	2020	change
	average		estimate	2020/2019
	000 tonnes			percent
Wheat	159	140	130	-7.1
Barley	70	70	70	0.0
Millet	6	6	6	0.0
Others	3	3	3	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>-4.6</b>

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet.

Cereal crop production in 2020 is estimated at 209 000 tonnes, about 5 percent less than in the previous year and about 12 percent below the average. The country relies heavily on imports (up to 90 percent) to cover its cereal consumption requirements (mostly wheat and barley). Thus, changes in the domestic cereal production have very little impact on the magnitude of the import requirement. In the 2020/21 marketing year (July/June), the actual import requirement is projected at 3.2 million tonnes, about the same as in the previous year.

### Political instability affecting economy

As of April 2020, the economy was forecast to contract by 20 percent in 2020, driven by low global oil prices, political instability and the measures introduced to restrict the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The actual contraction is likely to be deeper. Oil fields, refineries and port infrastructure were shut down between January and mid-September 2020 due to internal fights between governing parties, effectively imposing a blockade on oil production. According to National Petroleum Company (NOC), the blockade resulted in more than USD 9.8 billion in lost revenue and aggravated electricity and fuel shortages in the country. During the blockade, the country was pumping less than 100 000 barrels per day, compared to the daily potential estimated at 1.2 million barrels.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, nine years of protracted conflict have tested the already fragile governance systems responsible for delivering the basic services. Heavy fighting continues to impact civilians and civilian infrastructure, including health care facilities designated for COVID-19 patients.

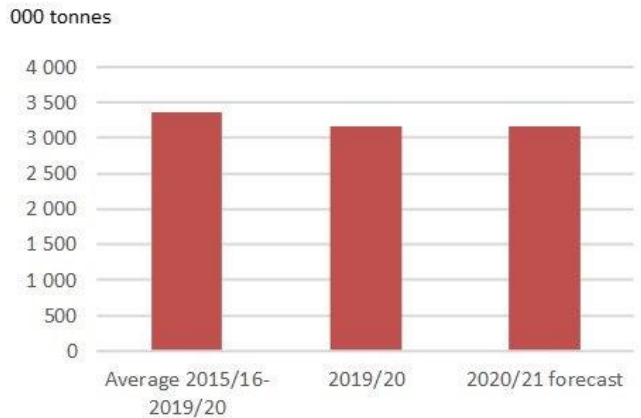
According to the Libya Joint Market Monitoring Initiative, in the second week of September 2020 (latest information available), the cost of the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB), albeit marginally lower than in August 2020, was still over 20 percent more expensive than in March 2020. Unlike early in the global pandemic in March, no major shortages were reported on the markets in September. The high unemployment rate (reported to be 14 percent), low purchasing power of the population and continuing power cuts led to protests across the country in September 2020. Officially USD 1 sells for LYD 1 412, while on the parallel market during the second week of September USD 1 sold for LYD 5 590.

Food security is impacted by the dwindling access to food as a consequence of unemployment, unpaid salaries and lost income from lockdowns and other restrictions. Most Government employees were not paid on time even before the start of the pandemic. Private sector workers usually work without a formal contract and the closure of business activities due to COVID-19 interrupted their income. In particular, the livelihoods of casual workers have been severely disrupted. According to the preliminary analysis of the 2020 Libya Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA), 20 percent of the households reported that their main place of work had closed down as a result of COVID-19 measures.

Prior the start of the pandemic, the 2020 Libya Humanitarian Needs Overview estimated the total number of people in need of humanitarian assistance at 0.9 million (about 13 percent of the population), a slight increase from the 0.8 million in 2019. Half of the people in need of humanitarian assistance are internally

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### Cereals Imports



Note: Includes rice in milled terms. Split year refers to individual crop marketing years (for rice, calendar year of second year shown).  
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets.

displaced and migrants in/or transiting through the country. The current figures of people in need are likely to be higher given the economic situation in the country and the impact of the measures introduced to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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