Shortages and high prices of fertilizers and fuel raise concerns for performance of 2022 crops

Harvesting of the 2022 mostly irrigated wheat crop is ongoing in the southern parts of the country, while in the north crops are still at grain filling stage and the harvest is expected to start in early May. Heavy rains in mid-October caused floods in western and eastern provinces, delaying planting activities by about two weeks. Weather conditions were generally favourable from November onwards and, together with adequate supplies of irrigation water, supported crop establishment and development. However, there are concerns on the final yields due to a reduced application of fertilizers (mostly imported), caused by their high prices and limited availability.

Planting operations of the 2022 maize crop are ongoing and will finalize in mid-May, while planting of the paddy crop, the country’s main staple, will start at the end of May. Concerns exist that farmers’ planting intentions may be negatively affected by the high prices of fertilizers and fuel.

Average cereal production obtained in 2021

Harvesting of the 2021 season crops finalized last December and the aggregate cereal production is estimated at average of 10.3 million tonnes.

Paddy production, which accounts for the bulk of the country’s cereal output, is estimated at 5.1 million tonnes, down 9 percent from the 2020 level, due to reduced yields following unseasonal rains and floods last October that affected crops almost ready to be harvested. The 2021 maize output is estimated at an above-average level of 2.7 million tonnes, reflecting extended plantings driven by the strong demand of the feed industry and above-average yields, supported by favourable weather conditions. The 2021 wheat output is estimated at a bumper level.
of 2.1 million tonnes, owing to above-average levels of both area planted and yields.

Cereal import requirements in 2021/22 marketing year forecast at above-average level

Cereal import requirements for the 2021/22 marketing year (July/June) are forecast at an above-average level of 2.3 million tonnes. Rice imports in calendar year 2022 are forecast at 1.35 million tonnes, up 13 percent from 2021 levels. Imports of maize are forecast close to average at 400 000 tonnes, while imports of wheat are expected to more than double the average levels at 500 000 tonnes due to the strong local demand for bread and bakery products.

Food security situation improved after start of COVID-19 pandemic

Since April 2020, WFP conducted five surveys to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on livelihoods and households’ food insecurity in the country. According to the results of the latest October 2021 survey, the overall food security conditions improved compared to 2020 and the first part of 2021. However, the limited economic growth will likely continue to negatively affect livelihoods and income generating activities. Food insecurity concerns exist for an estimated 2.8 million food insecure people, accounting for about 10 percent of the total population, mostly concentrated in the remote northern parts of far- and mid-western mountainous regions. These regions are characterized by low agricultural productivity and poorly functioning markets that limit access to food for the most vulnerable population. In addition, the expected decrease in agricultural output in 2022 is likely to affect farmers and casual labourers, due to a reduction of income and employment opportunities.

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