



GIEWS Country Brief Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

Reference Date: 28-June-2021

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Planting of winter crops ongoing at slow pace due to shortages of diesel
- Import requirements of cereals in 2021/22 forecast below average
- Concerns over continued poor access to food

Planting of winter crops ongoing at slow pace due to shortages of diesel

Planting of the 2021 main maize and minor rice crops is underway at a slow pace due to shortages of diesel, which are expected to curb the planted area. Imports of diesel declined significantly since November 2020, in the context of international sanctions. Small farmers, who normally receive subsidized diesel from the government, reported delays and disruptions of planting operations. According to satellite imagery, crop conditions are currently favourable in key producing departments of Barinas, Cojedes, Guarico and Portuguesa, as abundant precipitation amounts in April 2021 benefitted soil moisture levels (VHI map). Rainfall amounts declined in May and are forecast at a below-average level in June, with likely negative effects on yields. However, weather forecasts point to a high likelihood of average precipitation amounts in July and August, which are expected to favour the establishment of late planted crops.

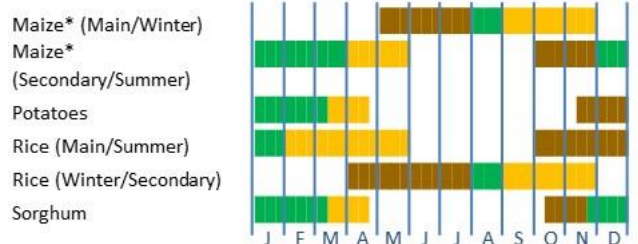
Harvesting of the 2021 main rice and minor maize crops concluded in May and production is expected to increase moderately from a record low level in 2020. The year-on-year increase is mainly due to a modest expansion of the planted area and higher yields. During this season, yet available diesel reserves enabled planting operations in the last quarter of 2020. Planting was also supported by the year-on-year improved availability of agricultural inputs, following alliances between public companies and private sector representatives. Reflecting favourable weather conditions and the increased use of agricultural inputs, yields are estimated to be above the previous year's low levels. In some producing areas, harvesting operations and commercialization of harvested crops were reportedly disrupted by the dwindling access to diesel.

Cereal output in 2021 is forecast below the levels produced during the pre-crisis (2010-2014) period, when the country's average output was about 3.4 million tonnes.

Venezuela

Crop Calendar

(*major foodcrop)

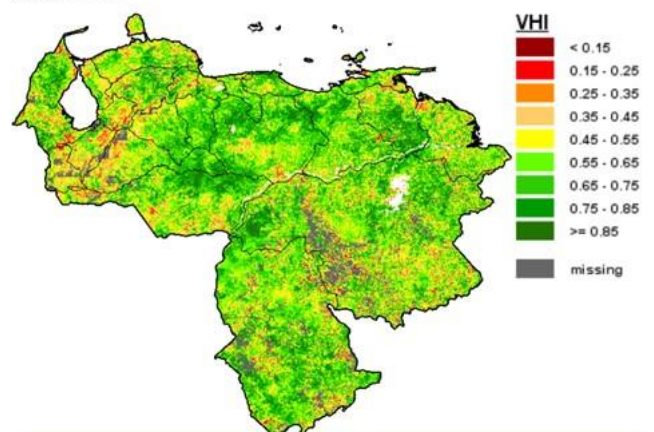


Sowing
Growing
Harvesting

Source: FAO/GIEWS.

Venezuela - Vegetation Health Index (VHI)

May 2021



Source: FAO/GIEWS Earth Observation System.

Import requirements of cereals in 2021/22 forecast below average

Import requirements of cereals in the 2021/22 marketing year (July/June) are forecast at below-average levels. The lower requirements are mainly due to reduced domestic consumption needs, reflecting the declining population since 2017 following the high levels of emigration.

Cereal imports in 2019 and 2020 were below the previous five-year average, as the country's import capacity has been severely curtailed by the depreciation on the domestic currency and a sharp decline in oil export revenues, amid a tightening of international sanctions in 2017. To facilitate imports, the government has relaxed its strict currency exchange controls and has granted permission to private traders to import essential items. The government also lifted import and value-added tax on a number of products, including cereals ([FPMA Food Policy](#)).

Concerns over continued poor access to food

The national economy, highly dependent on oil production and exports, is forecast to contract in 2021 for the eighth consecutive year. With the persistent negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic that have compounded the already severe macro-economic crisis, the access to food of the most vulnerable households is expected to deteriorate throughout 2021 due to widespread losses of income-generating activities and soaring food prices. According to the Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela, in response to the poor economic conditions, an estimated 5.6 million people (nearly 20 percent of the population) emigrated, as of early June 2021.

In order to improve the food security conditions of vulnerable households, the government signed an agreement with the World Food Programme (WFP) in April 2021 to roll out a school feeding programme. This aims to deliver food to 183 000 school children by the end of 2021 and to extend the coverage to 1.5 million children by the end of 2023. In addition, the government plans to continue delivering food packages to the vulnerable households in 2021 through the Local Committees for Supply and Production programme (CLAP), which purchases cereals from local farmers.

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