

FOODCROPS AND SHORTAGES

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	<p>AFRICA: In eastern Africa, the food situation in Eritrea is of serious concern. Successive years of inadequate rains have seriously undermined crop and livestock production. A below average harvest is also estimated for Sudan due to conflict and drought. By contrast, the food situation in Ethiopia has improved as a result of a good harvest. Kenya's poor second season maize crop will exacerbate food shortages in parts, while Somalia's good secondary "deyr" harvest will improve food supplies in main agricultural areas. In southern Africa, prospects for 2005 main season crops are mixed owing to delayed, erratic and generally below normal rainfall during the first half of the season. The food security situation for vulnerable populations, particularly in Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Swaziland is precarious during the current lean months. In western Africa, the food situation remains critical in Mauritania, while in Côte d'Ivoire insecurity continues to disrupt agricultural and marketing activities.</p>
	<p>ASIA/NEAR EAST: In the Asian CIS and Afghanistan prospects are for a good harvest this year, owing mainly to favourable weather conditions. In Iraq, weather conditions are favourable for the development of winter crops. The recent earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean caused a large number of deaths and destroyed livelihoods of millions of people in several countries. The worst affected include Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Maldives, India and Thailand. More than 1.3 million people have received food assistance; relief operations have entered the recovery and reconstruction phase. In Korea DPR, despite a recovery in food production the country still needs international assistance to meet its minimum food needs.</p>
	<p>LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: In Central America, first and second season maize and bean crops have been damaged by dry weather conditions and food assistance is being provided to the affected families. In Guyana, torrential rains have caused severe flooding and river overflow. Food assistance continues to be provided in Haiti to families affected by recent floods and droughts. In South America, overall prospects for wheat, maize and paddy crops are favourable, except in Ecuador and Peru where production of maize and rice may be affected by dry weather at sowing.</p>
	<p>EUROPE: A reduction in cereal production is expected in the EU in 2005 after the bumper crop last year, reflecting an increase in the set-aside requirement, which will force down the area sown and the likelihood that yields will fall back from last year's highs. A reduction in output is also in prospect in the Balkan countries where yields are not expected to match last year's exceptionally good levels. In the European CIS protective snow cover is seen to reduce winterkill and prospects are for a good harvest throughout the region.</p>
	<p>NORTH AMERICA: Despite generally favourable weather conditions so far this winter, latest information points to a reduced wheat output in 2005 in the United States, as the area sown to the main winter crop has been reduced by 4 percent compared to the previous year. The main 2005 crops in Canada have still to be sown but early indications point to a possible decrease in output this year due to reduced plantings and expected yields.</p>
	<p>OCEANIA: Australia's 2004 cereal output remained about average but well down on the previous year's record after several major producing areas were struck by drought conditions. Early prospects for the 2005 summer coarse grain crop are very favourable reflecting timely planting rains in the main producing areas.</p>

