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FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Dry and hot weather negatively affected 2012 maize prospects but an average crop still expected
- Production of 2011 wheat below last year's level still above average
- Exports of maize in 2012/13 (March/February) may decline slightly

Dry weather conditions reduce 2012 maize prospects but an average production still forecast

Sowing of the 2012 maize crop is virtually completed in the main growing provinces of Buenos Aires, Córdoba, La Pampa and Santa Fe. Dry and hot weather conditions from the second week of December to early January negatively affected developing crops. Early planted crops (September and first half of October), were the most affected as the heat wave hit crops during the flowering period. Rains from the second week of January brought some relief to crops, but were too late to avoid yield reductions. The area planted is estimated around the good level of last year but lower than expected at the beginning of the season. Assuming regular precipitation in the coming weeks, FAO tentatively forecasts the 2012 maize crop, to be harvested from March, at 21.4 million tonnes. This is 7 percent down from the record level of 2011, but still some 4 percent above the average of the last five years.

Early planted sorghum was also affected by dry weather and high temperatures. However, in general, this crop is more resistant to heat than maize and has showed signs of recovery after the precipitation of the past weeks. If good rains continue, an above average output could still be obtained.

Planting operations of soya-beans in the main growing areas of Buenos Aires, Córdoba and Santa Fe are about to be concluded. The planted area is estimated similar to the high levels of the previous year but dry weather has negatively affected yield potential. However, a recovery of the crop could be expected if more rains are received in the next weeks.

Production of 2011 wheat below the bumper level of 2010 but above average

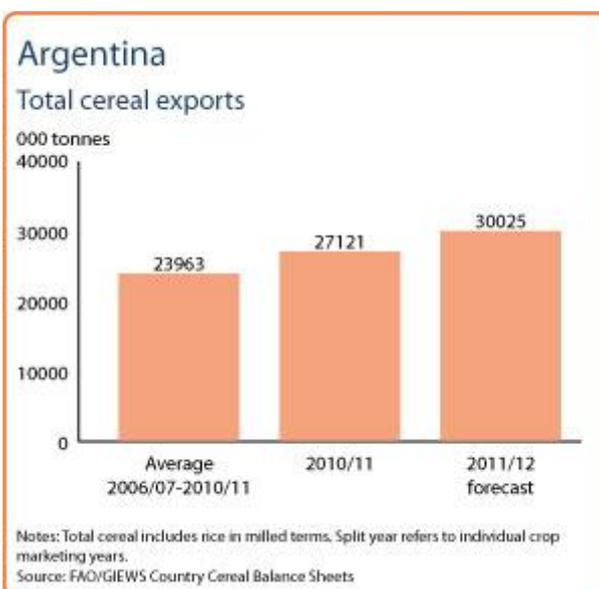
Harvesting of the 2011 wheat was completed at the end of the year. The crop was negatively affected by prolonged dry conditions from August to October that reduced yields. Despite a slight increase in the area planted, the output is officially estimated 12 percent below the bumper harvest in 2010 at 13.4 million tonnes, However, at this level, production remains some 6 percent above the average of the last five years.



Argentina Cereal production

	2006-2010 average	2010	2011 estimate	change 2011/2010
	000 tonnes		percent	
Maize	18 803	22 677	23 005	1
Wheat	12 658	15 271	13 410	-12
Sorghum	2 632	3 629	4 440	22
Others	3 421	4 951	5 383	9
Total	37 514	46 528	46 238	-1

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets



Maize exports increased in marketing year 2011/12 but are likely to decline slightly in 2012/13

Exports of maize in marketing year 2011/12 (March/February) are anticipated to increase by 13 percent compared to the previous season as a result of improved availabilities from the record 2011 harvest. For the new marketing year 2012/13, exports may decline slightly, with an anticipated reduction in output partially offset by large carry-over stocks.

Maize export prices increased in January

Export prices of yellow maize in Argentina increased in the two first week of January, supported by the deterioration of the crop prospects, but fell in the third week of the month following trends in international markets. Prices are still below their high levels of a year earlier.

