GIEWS Country Brief
Bangladesh

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FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- **Boro** paddy output in 2019 estimated at record high
- Cereal import requirements in 2019/20 forecast close to five-year average
- Prices of rice at low levels in July, after steady declines between September 2018 and April 2019
- Prices of wheat remained generally stable, so far, in 2019 and close to year-earlier level
- Severe floods in northern and eastern parts expected to affect households’ food security
- High levels of severe food insecurity persist in Cox’s Bazar District, where almost 1 million refugees reside

**Boro** paddy output in 2019 estimated at record high

Harvesting of the 2019 **Boro** paddy crop, which accounts for about 55 percent of the annual output, was completed in May. The output is estimated at a record high of 19.7 million tonnes. The large output reflects above-average plantings and high yields, following favourable weather conditions.

The 2019 minor **Aus** paddy crop, accounting for about 10 percent of the total annual output, is currently being harvested. Production is forecast to decrease compared to last year’s high level, mostly reflecting the contraction in plantings as farmers shifted from paddy to more profitable crops, including jute, maize and vegetables. In addition, some standing crops were lost to floods following heavy rainfall in June and the first half of July, mostly in the northern and eastern parts of the country.

Planting of the 2019 **Aman** paddy crop, which accounts for 35 percent of the annual output is ongoing and will continue until end-September. So far, the June-October monsoon season has been characterized by average to above-average precipitation, with an overall positive impact on planting operations and development of crops. Some replanting, due to flood damage, took place in the most affected areas. Overall, the **Aman** area planted is expected to decrease compared to last year’s high level, mostly owing to low market prices.

The 2019 main season maize crop was harvested by the end of July. The output is estimated at a record high level, reflecting an expansion in the area sown, driven by robust demand from the...
feed industry and bumper yields as farmers increased the use of high-yielding seed varieties. The 2019 secondary season maize crop will be planted towards the end of the year.

The production of the 2019 winter wheat crop, harvested in April, is officially estimated at 1.3 million tonnes, close to the five-year average.

**Cereal imports in 2019/20 forecast close to five-year average**

Wheat import requirements, which account for the largest share of the cereal imports, are estimated at a record of 5.7 million tonnes in the 2019/20 marketing year (July/June), 12 percent above the previous five-year average following steady increases since 2012/13. The strong demand for wheat largely reflects a shift in diet preferences. Similarly, maize import requirements are expected to increase to 1.8 million tonnes, 6 percent more than last year's record level and the fifth consecutive annual increase due to sustained demand for feed. By contrast, the ample domestic supplies of rice following the record 2018 output have lowered import requirements and, consequently, rice imports are estimated at a well below-average level of 250 000 tonnes.

Overall, total cereal import requirements in 2019/20 are forecast close to the five-year average at 7.8 million tonnes.

**Prices of rice at low levels in July, while those of wheat close to year-earlier levels**

Domestic prices of rice in the capital, Dhaka, decreased by about 10 percent between January and April 2019, reflecting abundant supplies from the record harvests in 2018. However, since April, prices remained generally stable, reflecting a number of measures implemented by the Government that sought to halt the declining trend of the preceding months. These measures include larger procurement purchases of the Boro season rice crop compared with the same season last year and an increase in import duties now set at 55 percent from the previous 28 percent. Prices of rice were about 20 percent below their year-earlier levels.

Prices of wheat, which is mostly imported, were relatively stable between April and July 2019, reflecting adequate supplies from imports and the bumper 2019 harvest.

**Severe floods expected to worsen food insecurity in northern and eastern parts**

In June and early July, severe floods have affected about 5.3 million people, mostly in the northern and eastern parts of the country. The most affected districts are Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Sylhet and Sunamganj (located in the north) and some districts in the Dhaka and Chittagong divisions. Floods have deteriorated the already precarious living conditions and the food security situation of about 910 000 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar in the Cox Bazar District. Most refugees fled to Bangladesh following the resurgence of violence in Rakhine State in Myanmar in late August 2017. They reside in temporary settlements where they suffer from high level of food insecurity and require humanitarian assistance to cover their basic needs. In addition, the influx of refugees is putting strain on the already limited resources of the host communities.
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