



# GIEWS Country Brief Botswana

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## FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Cereal production forecast well above-average level in 2021
- Despite large output in 2020, cereal imports grew in 2020/21
- Prices of grains and cereal products higher year on year
- Pockets of food insecurity persist in early 2021 due to effects of COVID-19

## Cereal production forecast well above-average in 2021

Planting of the 2021 cereal crops, mainly sorghum and maize, concluded in January and harvesting activities are expected to start in late April. Aggregate cereal production is forecast at 66 000 tonnes, about 40 percent above the five-year average. The favourable production outlook mainly reflects an expansion in the planted area and expectations of above-average yields owing to generally conducive rainfall between November 2020 and early March 2021.

The favourable rainfall also benefited vegetation conditions in rangelands across the country. Good pasture conditions are expected to support an upturn in livestock production in 2021.

Notwithstanding the positive effects of beneficial weather on the agricultural outlook, infestations of African Migratory Locust (AML) remain a risk to the 2021 production. In 2021, country reports indicate that AML swarms have increased between January and March in northwestern and northeastern parts where abundant rainfall have been conducive for insect breeding. However, assessments of the actual extent of the area affected and the damage caused to crops are not yet available.

## Cereal imports grew in 2020/21

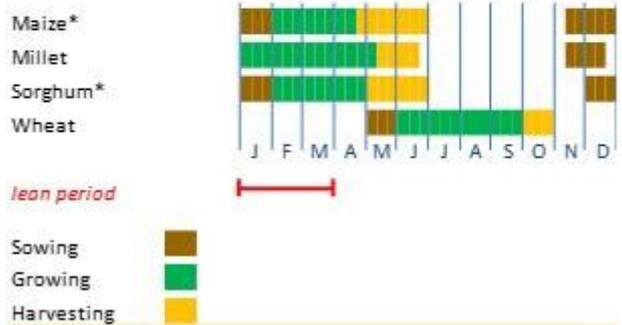
The country is a net importer of cereals, with more than 90 percent of the domestic requirements normally satisfied by imports. In spite of an above-average cereal output in 2020, estimated at 50 000 tonnes, cereal imports in the 2020/21 marketing year (April/March) increased year on year. The high imports, estimated at 465 000 tonnes, are about 20 percent above the previous five-year average.

Imports of maize, which normally account for the largest share of imports, are estimated at 290 000 tonnes. In particular, imports of

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Crop Calendar

(\*major foodcrop)



Source: FAO/GIEWS.

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### Cereal Production

	2016-2020	2020	2021	change
	average			forecast
000 tonnes				
Sorghum	29	30	40	33.3
Maize	12	15	20	33.3
Millet	3	4	5	25.0
Others	1	1	1	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>32.0</b>

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet.

white maize, which is used for food consumption, are estimated at 230 000 tonnes, about 35 percent above the average. Imports of yellow maize, mostly used for animal feed, are estimated at average 60 000 tonnes. The large import quantities of maize mainly reflect the country's drive to secure supplies and build up stocks amid concerns of the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, a significant decrease in maize prices between May and August 2020 in South Africa, the country's main supplier of grains, supported a stronger import pace. Subsequently, prices in South Africa went back up to high levels and imports returned to normal volumes.

For the 2021/22 marketing year (April/March), cereal import requirements are anticipated to remain at an above-average level, but to decline on a yearly basis, reflecting increased availabilities from the larger 2021 harvest and a high level of carryover stocks.

### Prices of cereals and cereal products higher year on year

According to the latest data by Statistics Botswana, the annual food inflation rate in February 2021 was estimated at 3.7 percent. Retail prices of bread and cereals, which have the largest weight in the food price index, increased steadily throughout 2020 and, in early 2021, they were estimated to be 7.5 percent higher year on year. The price gains largely reflect higher year on year prices of maize and wheat in South Africa.

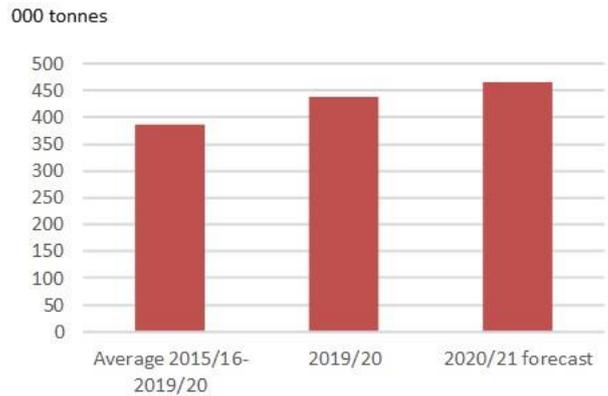
### Pockets of food insecurity persist in early 2021 due to effects of COVID-19

About 38 000 people were estimated to be food insecure in the April 2020-March 2021 period, close to the number estimated in 2019/20. The unchanged prevalence of food insecurity, despite the larger agricultural output in 2020 reflects the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on households' access to food, mostly resulting from income reductions as the national economy went into a sharp recession in 2020.

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### Cereals Imports



Note: Includes rice in milled terms. Split year refers to individual crop marketing years (for rice, calendar year of second year shown).

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets.