Paddy production in 2019 expected to remain at below-average level

Planting of the 2019 paddy crop, to be harvested in September and October, concluded in June, and the area sown is expected to be similar to last year’s below-average level. The planted area with paddy crops has been steadily declining since 2002, as farmers have progressively switched to alternative crops, in part reflecting a decrease in rice consumption.

Weather conditions this season have been generally conducive for crop growth, with well distributed and adequate rainfall amounts recorded between April and July 2019. Reflecting these weather patterns, as of mid-July remote sensing data indicated average to above-average vegetation conditions (see ASI map) in the main paddy producing areas.

Mostly reflecting the reduced plantings, the 2019 paddy production is preliminary forecast at 5.2 million tonnes, about 6 percent below the five-year average, which would be the second lowest output in the last 10 years.

Harvesting of the 2019 winter crops, mainly barley and wheat, concluded in June and harvests are estimated at near-average levels of 127 000 and 31 000 tonnes, respectively.

Cereal import requirements in 2018/19 marketing year estimated slightly above the five-year average

The country relies on imports to satisfy its domestic demand as local production covers only a fifth of domestic cereal requirements.

Total cereal import requirements in the 2018/19 marketing year (October/September) are estimated at 14.2 million tonnes, virtually unchanged from the previous year’s average level.
Maize import, which account for the largest share of annual cereal imports, are forecast at 10 million tonnes in 2018/19, close to the five-year average, reflecting sustained demand from the feed industry. Wheat import requirements are estimated to reach 3.7 million tonnes, close to the previous year’s below-average level. This reduction reflects a slowdown in demand for feed use, as maize is expected to partially substitute the use of wheat in the feed compounds. Imports of rice in the 2019 calendar year are forecast at 410 000 tonnes, about 6 percent above the five-year average.

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