Planting of 2020 paddy crops underway following favourable weather conditions

Planting of the 2020 main season cereal crops, mainly paddy, has recently started and is expected to continue until mid-January. Overall, adequate and well-distributed rains from October have boosted soil moisture levels and supported planting activities.

The latest seasonal weather forecasts indicate a higher likelihood of average to above-average rainfall for the period between November 2019 and March 2020 in the key paddy-producing areas, located in the central and northern regions. By contrast, rainfall is forecast at below-average levels for the same period in most southern regions, which normally experience prolonged periods of drought conditions.

Above-average paddy production estimated in 2019

Harvesting of the 2019 paddy crop concluded in July and production is estimated at about 3.9 million tonnes, 9 percent above the previous five-year average. Production increases were reported across most regions, mainly due to an above-average area planted and high yields resulting from conducive rainfall and temperatures throughout the cropping season.

Harvesting of the 2019 maize crop concluded last April and production is estimated at 220 000 tonnes, slightly above the previous year’s low level but still well below the five-year average. In spite of an estimated increase in yields this year, supported by favourable weather conditions, a lower-than-average area planted kept this year’s harvest at a low level. The reduced area sown to maize was partly caused by...
infestations of Fall Armyworms, reported in the country since 2017, which prompted farmers to decrease plantings.

### Cereal import requirements increase slightly in 2019/20

The aggregate import requirement of cereals in the 2019/20 marketing year (April/March) are forecast to increase to an above-average level of 600,000 tonnes. Despite the rebound in paddy production in 2020, import requirements of rice, which account for the largest share of imports, are forecast at 450,000 in 2019/20, 15 percent above the average, as the country seeks to replenish stocks and buffer domestic availabilities following two consecutive years of below average paddy harvests. Import requirements of wheat are forecast at 130,000 tonnes, 7 percent above the average, reflecting increasing demand for food use.

### Prices of rice increased seasonally but lower on a yearly basis

Prices of rice have increased seasonally in the past four months but, as of October 2019, they were lower on year as the 2019 bumper harvest boosted national supplies. Stable exchange rates and international prices of rice have also contributed to limiting imported inflation in 2019 and lessening upward pressure on domestic rice prices.

### High prevalence of severe food insecurity persists in spite of improved 2019 harvests

The number of people experiencing severe food insecurity declined by almost 30 percent in 2019, mainly due to improved domestic availabilities of staple foods (rice, maize and cassava) and lower prices of cereals compared to the previous year. According to the latest Vulnerability Assessment Committee’s (VAC) evaluation, about 916,000 people are estimated to be in IPC Phase 3: “Crisis” and Phase 4: “Emergency” in December 2019, well below 1,26 million people in the previous year.

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