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The entire land area of the country is only 300 sq km of which some 9 000 hectares are covered with permanent crops dominated by coconuts; only 3 990 hectares are considered arable. Practically no cereals are produced, therefore the population, estimated at 352 000 (FAOSTAT, 2014), is heavily dependent on imported food.

Cereal imports for the 2013/14 marketing year (January/December) are estimated at 51 100 tonnes (comprising rice about 21 000 and maize about 31 100 tonnes), slightly higher than the above-average level of the previous year. Similar cereal import volumes are forecast for the 2014/15 marketing year. The Maldives has, however, a very productive fisheries sector which provides a good source of food locally, as well as of income by supplying to the tourism industry which amounts for more than 1 million visitors annually. The main issue in the Maldives within the agriculture sector is to develop better linkages to the tourism industry for the marketing of local agriculture products in order to enhance the livelihoods of farmers and better ensure their food security. The depletion of the freshwater aquifers, with implications for irrigation as well as drinking purposes, is a big challenge. Overall food security is satisfactory.

