



GIEWS Country Brief Libya

Reference Date: 13-May-2020

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Insecurity and expensive agricultural inputs continue to limit crop production
- Below-average cereal crop forecast in 2020
- People in need of assistance estimated at 0.9 million
- Food prices increased in early April 2020 as consumers stockpiled facing COVID-19 pandemic

Insecurity and expensive agricultural inputs continue to limit crop production

Harvesting of the 2020 winter barley is almost complete, while wheat harvesting started in early May. Remote sensing analysis indicated favourable crop development with good rains throughout the season. However, continued military operations, particularly around Tripoli, have had a negative impact on agricultural activities.

Environmental constraints limit the development of agriculture in the country. About 1.8 million hectares (out of 15.4 million) are arable, out of which 300 000 hectares are covered by permanent crops, mostly fruit and olive trees. The area suitable for irrigation is about 470 000 hectares, but only some 240 000 hectares are currently irrigated due to concerns over the depletion of underground water. Cereals are cultivated in the coastal regions, where rainfed production or cropping with supplementary irrigation is possible, and in the arid southern areas under full irrigation. The most commonly grown vegetables are tomatoes, peppers, onions and leafy greens.

Although agriculture contributed less than 3 percent to the Gross Domestic Production (GDP) in 2011 (last information available), over one-fifth of the population is engaged in a variety of agricultural activities, often producing crops only for household consumption. Farmers report that power cuts, insecurity as well as expensive seeds, water, fuel, tools and machinery limit their capacity to produce. Sheep and goats dominate livestock production, mostly in the interior of the country. Livestock producers complain about the lack of veterinary services, vaccines and medicine as well as the high costs of feed and fodder.

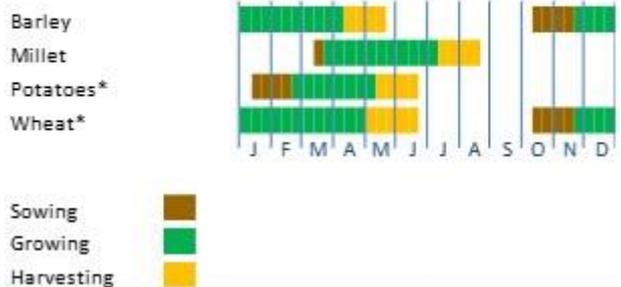
Below-average crop forecast in 2020

Cereal crop production in 2020 is forecast at 209 000 tonnes, about 5 percent less than in the previous year, but about 12 percent below the average. The country relies heavily on

Libya

Crop Calendar

(*major foodcrop)



Source: FAO/GIEWS.

Libya

Cereal Production

	2015-2019 average	2019	2020 forecast	change 2020/2019
	000 tonnes			percent
Wheat	159	140	130	-7.1
Barley	70	70	70	0.0
Millet	6	6	6	0.0
Others	3	3	3	0.0
Total	238	219	209	-4.6

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet.

imports (up to 90 percent) to cover its cereal consumption requirements, mostly wheat and barley, therefore, changes in the domestic cereal production have very little impact on the import requirement. In the 2019/20 marketing year (July/June), the actual import requirement is projected at 3.2 million tonnes, about the same as in the previous year.

Low oil prices, political instability and pandemic affecting economy

The GDP growth in the country is dependent on changes in oil and gas output. In 2020, the GDP is forecast to contract by 12 percent, driven by low global oil prices and internal fights over oil between governing parties. In the first three months of 2020, the country produced about 120 000 barrels of oil per day, down from 1.06 million barrels of oil per day in the first eight months of 2020.

Most Libyans are employed in the public sector where salaries have not been paid for months. Government workers in eastern part of the country received their 2020 wages for the first time at the end of March 2020.

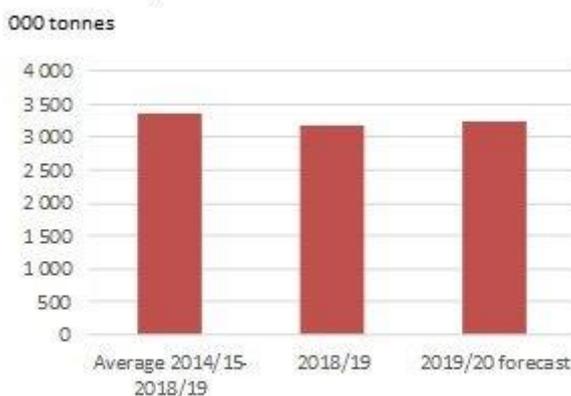
According to the Libya Joint Market Monitoring Initiative, in the first week of April 2020 (latest information available), the cost of the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) increased on average by almost 30 percent, driven mostly by increases in cooking fuel. The largest price increases were reported in the south where Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders are available only on the parallel market. Some markets reported shortages of food supplies, such as eggs, vegetables and wheat products. The median price for wheat flour increased by 50 percent. The Ministry of Economy has indicated that the country has sufficient stocks of wheat flour for three months.

The increases were due to stockpiling of food due to COVID-19, depreciation of Libyan Dinar on the parallel exchange rate between December 2019 and April 2020, and the decision of the Central Bank of Libya to halt foreign currency transactions in March 2020, thus limiting the flow of goods to the country. Officially USD 1 sells for LYD 1 412, while on the parallel market USD 1 sells for LYD 4 950.

The 2020 Libya Humanitarian Needs Overview estimated the total number of people in need of humanitarian assistance at 0.9 million (about 13 percent of the population), a slight increase from the 0.8 million (11 percent of the population) in 2019. Half of the people in need of humanitarian assistance are internally displaced and migrants in or transiting through the country.

Libya

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.

COVID-19 and measures adopted by the Government

To contain the spread of the disease, the authorities in their respective areas of control introduced various containment measures. The borders have been closed since 16 March 2020 and social distancing measures were introduced. In the East, in areas controlled by the Libyan National Army (LNA), the curfew runs from 18:00 to 06:00. The 24-hour curfew imposed by the Government of National Accord (GNA) ended on 26 April 2020 and a partial curfew from 18:00 to 06:00 has then been implemented. Curfews are likely to have negative impact on the humanitarian situation in the country by limiting access.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, nine years of protracted conflict have tested the already fragile governance systems responsible for delivering the basic services. Heavy fighting continues to impact civilians and civilian infrastructure, including health care facilities designated for COVID-19 patients.

The Government allocated LYD 500 million (USD 350 million) for COVID-19 preparedness and response actions, primarily in the medical sector.

Most Government employees have not been paid on time even before the pandemic. Private sector workers usually work without a contract and closure of business activities interrupted their income. The livelihoods of casual workers have been disrupted. In general, access to cash remains a problem, with many banks closed.

The decision to close land borders has led to the rapid increases of fruit and vegetable prices since most of them are imported from Tunisia.

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