

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Iraq

Post: Baghdad

Wheat Crop Update

Report Categories:

Grain and Feed

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Report Highlights:

The failure to date of general rains in Iraq's northern wheat growing areas has reduced planted area and yield prospects. Iraq's 2012 wheat crop is projected to be around 1.87 million metric tons (MMT), 11 percent below last season's crop of 2.1 MMT.

General Information:**Iraq 2012 Wheat Crop 10 to 15 Percent below 2011**

The failure to date of general rains in Iraq's northern wheat growing areas has reduced planted area and yield prospects. Iraq's 2012 wheat crop is projected to be around 1.87 million metric tons (MMT), 11 percent below last season's crop of 2.1 MMT. Recent spotty rains have helped, but without a general rain in the next few days yield and production prospects are likely to decline further. Iraq will likely need to increase its imports of wheat for milling purposes, by the amount of the shortfall, at this time estimated to be around 250 TMT. Based on this production forecast, Post estimates total import needs for the 2012/13 marketing year at 3.3 MMT.

Seasonal Precipitation: September 1, 2011 – January 10, 2012

The critical dates for successfully planting wheat and barley across Northern Iraq are now past. Farmers generally hope to plant rain dependent areas in December, if rainfall is sufficient, but will plant into the second and third weeks of January if rains are spotty or light. Farmers across Erbil Province in the Kurdish Region appear to have planted wheat during the last week under generally dry conditions with very limited soil moisture present, in the hope that rains will still come in time to produce a limited crop. Another possibility is that some farmers are now planting just for grazing purposes.

Seasonal precipitation to date has been well below average across all areas of Northern Iraq. Farmers can plant into mid-January, but yield potential is diminished, assuming the crop becomes established. In most years, late plantings that emerge are often grazed off, as their yield potential is too low to justify harvesting cost.

In a good year, Northern Iraq's rain dependent wheat areas, including those in the Kurdish Region produce around 30 percent of the total Iraqi wheat crop. This production is highly variable as it is completely dependent upon fall and winter precipitation. During 2008 and 2009, these areas experienced drought conditions and near 100 percent crop failures. More recent crops across Kurdistan have been more successful, with a near-record harvest in 2010 and an average crop last year.

The provinces of Ninewa, in greater Iraq, and Dahuk, Erbil, and Sulaymaniyah in the Kurdish Region will face major crop losses, if general rains do not appear soon. While recent planting activity has been taking place, only weak storm systems are in the forecast through the end of the month. If these rains occur it may spur farmers into a last ditch planting effort, but additional heavy rains will be needed to ensure that the wheat crop becomes successfully established. The lack of rain has also affected the winter season recharge of Iraq's major storage reservoirs. While there is still time to make up for the deficit, the possibility of summer irrigation water shortages is a possibility.

Seasonal Percent of
Normal (%)

