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Planting figures - April 2009

The estimated total area planted for both communal and commercial sectors is 297,816 ha which is 92% of the 325,000 ha cultivable land countrywide.

Notably the total area planted by the communal sub sector is 278,500 ha which represents 93% of the national communal cultivable area (300 000 ha).

Pandamatenga commercial farms have planted 19,385ha out of 25,000 ha.

Communal Sub Sector

Some of the early-planted crops were harvested before full maturity due to pest infestation (quelea birds) mostly in the Northern part of the country. In the southern part of the country, most crops are still on the fields and harvesting is ongoing.

Generally crops planted after the 31st January in the southern part and those planted after 15th February 2009 in the Northern part of the country were affected by moisture stress at flowering stage due to early rainfall cessation (March 2009) and are likely to be affected by frost.

In Molapo farming areas some crops were harvested before full maturity due to floods experienced in Ngamiland and Chobe.

Pandamatenga Commercial Farms

The total area planted is reported at 19,385 ha by 26 farming enterprises. The area planted represents 78% of the 25,000ha allocated for farming.

The crops that were planted early are at maturity stage and harvesting has commenced. As at mid May a total of 469 tons of sorghum, 235 tons of millet, 123 tons of cowpeas and 70tons of soya beans had already been harvested. The chick peas were at seedling stage while sunflower crop was at seedling and vegetative stages as it was replanted.

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Crop damage by Pests, Disease and Wildlife

Crop damage in the communal sub sector

The quelea birds have damaged 373ha of sorghum with an estimated loss of 97 tons. The birds also caused an estimated loss of 4 tons of millet in the communal sub sector.

Furthermore 484ha of sorghum with an estimated loss of 48.4tons and 22 ha maize with an estimated yield loss of 4tons were affected by hail storm.

Wildlife destroyed 99ha of millet with an estimated loss of 26 tons. A further 66ha of maize with an estimated loss of 25tons was also damaged by wildlife.

The recent floods in Ngamiland and Chobe caused an estimated loss of 137 tons of maize that was planted in 396ha.

Crop Damage in Pandamatenga

A total of 661 ha of sorghum were affected by quelea with an estimated loss of 845 tons while 274ha of millet was affected by quelea and the estimated loss was 387tons.

An area of 5050 hectares was affected by floods, with an estimated loss of 7575 mt of sorghum. A further 70ha of millet was affected by floods and estimated loss was 105 tons while 55ha of cowpeas was affected with an estimated loss was 13 tons.

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Cereal Production and Consumption

The estimated national cereal requirement for the market year 2009/2010 is 200,000 metric tons. Maize requirements are estimated at 160,000 metric tons while sorghum/millet requirements are estimated at 45,000 metric tons (mt).

Cereal Imports

The cereals import plans for 2009/2010 are as follows: maize 160 000mt, wheat 94 000mt and sorghum 20,000mt. These plans are made based on the national requirement, past experiences and taking into account other factors such as changing consumption patterns and population growth and entry of migrants.

Notably, while the sorghum imports plans are about 20,000 mt, it should be noted that BAMB, as the sole supplier of sorghum, has not provided sorghum import plans because there is an expectation of procurement of sorghum from local production.

However, there are some commercial millers who will or continue to import sorghum due to logistical reasons such as prices and accessibility to the market especially as most imports are from South Africa.

The total imports received during the month of April stood at 30,353 mt. This constituted 47% of maize i.e. 14,300 mt which is the most imported cereal. Wheat and sorghum imports were 9,592mt (32%) and 4,412mt (11%) respectively. The remaining 9% percent is rice imports.

Cereal Stocks

The total cereal stocks stood at 66 845mt as at April 30th. The sorghum stocks stood at 39 349mt while maize and wheat stood at 8,763mt and 18,733 mt respectively. Notably, Botswana Agricultural Marketing Board (BAMB) held 17,343mt of the total sorghum stocks.

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Yields and Production Estimates

The forecast crop yields have decreased due to pests and flood. The production forecast stands at 28,610 mt.

The estimated total cereal production is 70 890 mt which represents about 35% of the 200,000 mt that is the estimated national requirement for major cereals (sorghum, maize and millet).

In spite of the fact that the area planted is higher than that of the last two seasons crop yields are lower than initial estimation in February due to moisture stress, pests, floods, hail storms and wildlife which affected a substantial hectorage.

This has seriously undermined the estimated total production. However, a non drought year is expected.

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