



GIEWS Country Brief The Kingdom of Eswatini

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FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Maize production falls below average in 2023 reflecting poor rainfall distribution
- Import requirements estimated to be near average in 2023/24 marketing year
- Maize meal prices declined from record highs reached in January 2023
- Food insecurity prevalence seen to increase in 2023/24

Maize production falls below average in 2023 reflecting poor rainfall distribution

Harvesting of the 2023 cereal crops was completed in June. Production of maize, the main cereal produced and consumed in the country, is estimated at 85 000 tonnes in 2023, about 15 percent below the previous five-year average. The low production is attributed to reduced yields, with plantings estimated at near-average levels.

The low yields in 2023 were primarily caused by an erratic temporal distribution of rainfall, despite cumulative seasonal rainfall amounts being close to normal levels. Dry spells in January and March 2023, crucial months for maize yield development, adversely affected crop productivity. Additionally, high costs of mineral fertilizers throughout 2022 led to reduced application rates, which was a secondary factor curbing yields in 2023. The decrease in fertilizer use was evident in the number of farmers participating in the government's input subsidy programme, down from 15 000 in 2021/22 to 11 500 in 2022/23. This was coupled with a steep increase in fuel prices that pushed up tractor rental costs for ploughing services and caused a reduction in tractor use.

The prevailing El Niño event is expected to bring drier-than-normal weather conditions between October 2023 and June 2024, posing a downside risk to the 2024 production. Preparations and [anticipatory actions](#) to mitigate the potential impact should be implemented in the forthcoming months.

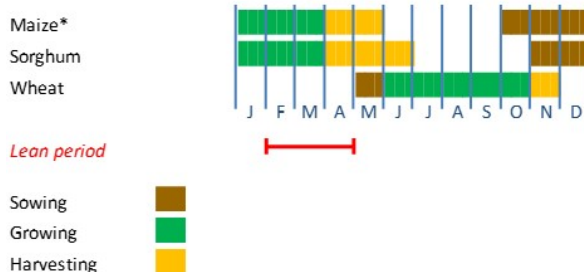
Import requirements estimated at average levels in 2023/24

Based on national cereal production and expected utilization in the 2023/24 marketing year (May/April), cereal import requirements, mainly maize, rice and wheat (in order of magnitude), are estimated at a near-average level of 221 000

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Crop Calendar

(*major foodcrop)



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Cereal Production

	2018-2022	2022	2023	change
	average		forecast	2023/2022
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	104	127	85	-33.1
Rice (paddy)	1	1	1	0.0
Sorghum	1	0	0	4.3
Total	106	129	87	-32.7

Note: Percentage change calculated from unrounded data.

tonnes. An anticipated drawdown in stocks in 2023/24, which have been built up in previous years, is seen to limit import needs in 2023/24.

Maize meal prices declined from record highs reached in January 2023

Prices of maize meal reached a record high at the start of 2023, reflecting trends in the international market, specifically in South Africa, the country's main source of grains. Since peaking in January 2023, the average price of maize meal has declined, but remained up to 33 percent higher on a yearly basis as of May 2023. Falling prices of maize in South Africa and the commercialization of the 2023 domestic harvest are attributed to the recent softening of local prices.

Food insecurity numbers expected to increase in 2023/24

The latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis projects that 238 500 people are facing acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 [Crisis] and above) between June and September 2023. The number of food insecure people is expected to increase to nearly 283 000 between October 2023 and March 2024, moderately higher than projections in the corresponding period of 2022/23. The anticipated year-on-year increase in acute food insecurity is underpinned by the reduced maize harvest and high food prices, whilst a slow economic recovery from the pandemic, causing income losses, is further constraining households' economic access to food.

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This brief was prepared using the following data/tools:

FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet (CCBS) <https://www.fao.org/giews/data-tools/en/>.

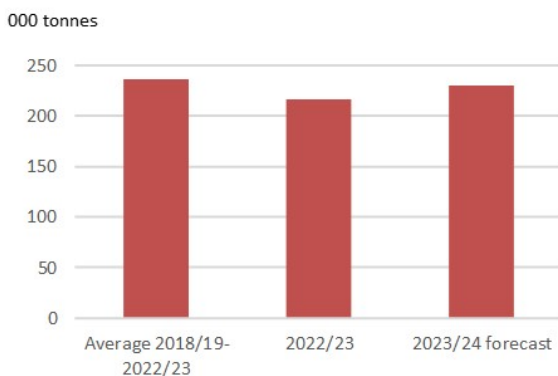
FAO/GIEWS Food Price Monitoring and Analysis (FPMA) Tool <https://fpma.fao.org/>.

FAO/GIEWS Earth Observation for Crop Monitoring <https://www.fao.org/giews/earthobservation/>.

Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) <https://www.ipcinfo.org/>.

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Cereals Imports



Notes: Includes rice in milled terms. Split years refer to individual crop marketing years (for rice, calendar year of second year shown).

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Retail prices of maize meal

