



GIEWS Country Brief Mauritius

Reference Date: 16-October-2020

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Production of food crops estimated at reduced level in first semester of 2020
- Prices of food increased steeply in early 2020, following overall stable trend in 2019
- COVID-19 pandemic causes income losses and raises concerns regarding access to food

Production of food crops in first semester of 2020 estimated at reduced level

About 40 percent of the country's land is used for crop cultivation, of which about 90 percent is sugarcane, a major export earner, with the remaining land planted with tea, tobacco and a small number of food crops.

According to Statistics Mauritius, production of food crops, mainly vegetables and fruits that, on average account for about 40 percent of the annual food crop output, is estimated at 31 000 tonnes in the first semester of 2020, 18 percent less than the output of the same period in 2019. The reduced level reflects a contraction in the planted area, which has been steadily declining since 2015, and low yields due to unfavourable weather conditions.

Production of sugarcane was estimated at 37 000 tonnes in the first semester of 2020, over 60 percent lower on a yearly basis reflecting a reduced planted area. The sown area to sugarcane has steadily decreased since 2016, driven by low export demand for Mauritian sugar. Based on current figures, production of sugar is forecast at about 290 000 tonnes in 2020, 20 percent below the five-year average.

Most of the cereal products consumed in the country are imported and only a small amount of cereals is produced domestically. For the 2020 marketing year (January-December), import requirements of cereals are estimated at 350 000 tonnes, about 7 percent above the five-year average, mainly due to increased demand for wheat.

Prices of food increased steeply at start of 2020, but eased in subsequent months

Following an overall stable trend in 2019, mainly reflecting trends in international food prices, the monthly food inflation rate increased sharply between January and April 2020, driven by a depreciation of the national currency, which lost about 10 percent

of its value against the United States dollar over that period. In addition, a sharp uptick in prices of locally produced vegetables and fruits contributed to the high inflation rates. The rising trend eased from May onwards and, as of September, food prices were only about 5 percent higher on a yearly basis.

COVID-19 pandemic causes income losses and raises concerns regarding access to food

Projections by the International Monetary Fund indicate that the national economy, highly dependent on tourism and service sectors, could contract by as much as 12 percent in 2020, driven by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The economic downturn is expected to result in widespread income losses, worsening households' capacity to purchase foods.

To help stabilize households' incomes, the Government has disbursed, from March to September 2020, MUR 25 million (about USD 624 million) through two employment assistance programmes, the "Wage Assistance Scheme" and the "Self Employed Assistance Scheme". These programmes ensure employees from private companies and self-employed workers continue to receive a monthly income. In July, the Government announced that both schemes would continue to assist employees and workers in the tourism sector until the country opens its borders.

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GIEWS Country Brief Mauritius

Reference Date: 22-April-2020

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- **Below-average production of food crops in 2019 and increased cereal imports**
- **Prices of food increased in early 2020, following overall stable trend in 2019**
- **Distribution of food kits amid measures to contain impacts of COVID-19 pandemic**

About 40 percent of the country's land is used for crop cultivation, of which roughly 90 percent is sugarcane, with the remaining land planted with tea, tobacco and a small number of food crops.

Production of food crops estimated below average in 2019

According to Statistics Mauritius, production of food crops in 2019, mainly vegetables and fruits, was estimated at 94 000 tonnes, about 10 percent below the previous five-year average. The low output was mainly due to low plantings and unfavourable weather conditions during the second half of the year.

Production of sugarcane, a significant export earner, is estimated at 3.4 million tonnes in 2019, 10 percent below the average, mostly reflecting a reduced planted area. The sown area to sugarcane has steadily decreased since 2016, driven by the weak international demand for sugar.

The country imports the bulk of its national food requirements and produces only a small amount of cereals. For the 2019 marketing year (January-December), imports of cereals were estimated at 335 000 tonnes, about 5 percent above the previous five-year average, mainly due to increased demand of wheat for human consumption.

In the 2020 marketing year (January-December), imports of cereals are expected to remain above the previous five-year average level.

Prices of food increased in first two months of 2020

In 2019, food prices and the overall inflation rate changed minimally, mainly owing to stable international food prices and a steady exchange rate.

As of February 2020, the annual inflation rate increased to 2.2 percent compared with a rate of 0.5 percent in December 2019. Increased prices of locally produced vegetables and fruits contributed to the uptick, partly reflecting reduced domestic outputs in 2019. Additionally, in February and March 2020, the national currency depreciated substantially, exerting inflationary pressure.

COVID-19 and measures adopted by the Government

In order to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, on 20 March 2020, a complete lockdown was enforced for a period of two weeks, which was subsequently extended until 5 May 2020. Airports and ports were closed, except for cargo and humanitarian shipments. Mobility restrictions included a curfew and the ban of passenger flights from and to Rodrigues and Agalega islands. Although agriculture activities were allowed to continue, sales at supermarkets were limited in order to impose strict measures of social distancing. The Ministry of Commerce increased its surveillance and monitoring activities in order to limit potential overpricing of food products.

The Bank of Mauritius has launched a special credit scheme of MUR 5 billion (about USD 123.8 million at the exchange rate as of 22 April 2020) to increase liquidity and help sustain economic activities of the industries affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The scheme is operated by commercial banks, with a six-month grace period for repayments and a low interest rate. To help stabilize households' incomes, the Mauritius Revenue Authority provided informal labourers with a one-off payment of MUR 5 100 (about USD 125). In addition, the Government has transferred about MUR 1.3 billion (USD 32.18 million) to private companies, under the Wage Assistance Scheme, to ensure that employees continue to receive their salaries.

An additional measure implemented by the Government was the distribution of 35 000 baskets of basic food items to the most vulnerable people affected by the pandemic.

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GIEWS Country Brief Mauritius

Reference Date: 20-December-2019

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Adequate food supplies in 2019
- Prices of food stable in 2019

About 40 percent of the country's land is used for crop cultivation, of which roughly 90 percent is sugarcane, with the remaining land planted with tea, tobacco and a small number food crops.

Production of food increased in first half of 2019

According to Statistics Mauritius, in the first semester of 2019, production of food, mainly vegetables and fruits, was estimated to be 35 percent above the level of the corresponding period in 2018. Production of paddy, the principal cereal produced in the country, increased on a yearly basis, mostly on account of favourable weather conditions that boosted yields.

The 2019 production of sugarcane, a significant export earner, is estimated at a below-average level, mostly reflecting a reduced planted area. The sown area to sugarcane has steadily decreased since 2016, mainly driven by lower international demand for sugar.

The country imports the bulk of its national food requirements and produces only a small amount of cereals. For the 2019 marketing year (January/December), imports of cereals are estimated at a near-average level of 310 000 tonnes.

Prices of food stable in 2019

Reflecting the country's high dependence on imports, prices of food as well as domestic inflation rates are significantly influenced by the exchange rate and the international prices of commodities. On account of only a slight depreciation of the national currency (Mauritian rupee) and stable international oil and food prices, the inflation rate remained at a low level in 2019.

As of November 2019, the annual inflation rate was estimated at 0.3 percent, compared to 3 percent in the same month of 2018. Prices of locally produced fruits and vegetables were around or slightly below their year-earlier values. Prices of imported staples, mainly rice and wheat flour, remained stable and unchanged as they are subsidized by the Government.

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GIEWS Country Brief Mauritius

Reference Date: 02-July-2018

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Total domestic food production unchanged in 2017
- Small uptick in annual inflation rate in 2018

About 40 percent of Mauritius' surface is used for cultivation, of which roughly 90 percent is sugarcane, with the remaining land planted with tea, tobacco and a few food crops.

Food crop production unchanged in 2017

The country imports the bulk of its national food requirements and only produces a small amount of cereals. Total food production, mainly vegetables and fruits, remained virtually unchanged in 2017, estimated at about 106 600 tonnes. However, the production of cereals declined marginally on account of a cut in the production of paddy.

The production of sugarcane, a significant export earner, declined marginally in 2017, mostly due to a reduction in the area harvested. Early projections for 2018 indicate a successive year-on-year decline, partly linked to changes in the European Union's policies on sugar production, which is expected to reduce the European Union's import needs and, therefore, lower exports from African producers, including Mauritius.

Inflation rate increases in 2018

As the country is heavily dependent on imports of food, prices of food as well as domestic inflation rates are significantly influenced by the exchange rate and international prices. A depreciation of the national currency (Mauritian rupee) and higher international oil prices led to a small uptick in inflation rates in 2018. As of May 2018, the annual inflation rate was estimated at 4.7 percent compared to 1.9 percent in the same month of 2017. Rice and wheat flour prices remained stable and unchanged as they are subsidized by the Government.

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GIEWS Country Brief Mauritius

Reference Date: 12-July-2016

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Food production fell in 2015
- Inflation rate falls below levels of previous year

About 40 percent of Mauritius' surface is used for cultivation, of which roughly 90 percent is sugarcane, with the remaining land planted with tea, tobacco and a few food crops.

Food crop production declined in 2015

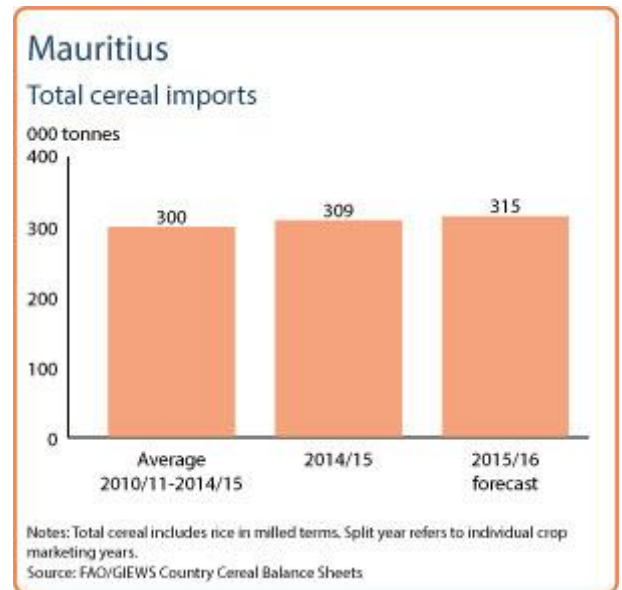
Domestic food production in 2015, mainly vegetables and fruits, decreased by about 12 percent, mainly on account of poor weather and a contraction in plantings. The bulk of the decline results from smaller potato and tomato harvests, while the rice output, produced in relatively small amounts, decreased by almost half in 2015 to 657 tonnes.

Production of sugarcane, a significant export earner, declined marginally in 2015, as poor weather caused a decrease in yields that more than offset a small increase in the area harvested.

Inflation rates in 2016 below previous year's levels

The country is heavily dependent on imports of food and as result food prices as well as domestic inflation are significantly influenced by the exchange rate and international prices. The generally lower international cereal and oil prices lessened imported inflation, despite some currency weakness adding upward pressure. As a result, the inflation rate in the first half of 2016 was below the previous year's value for the corresponding period.

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Reference Date: 03-June-2015

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Food production declines in 2014
- Inflation eases at start of 2015

About 40 percent of the Mauritius' Island surface is being used for cultivation, of which roughly 90 percent is sugar cane, the balance being tea, tobacco and few food crops.

Decrease in 2014 food production

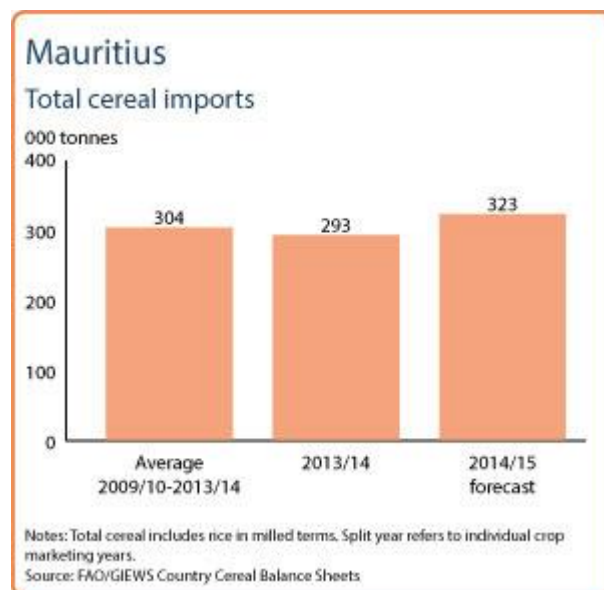
Domestic food production in 2014, mainly vegetables and fruits, decreased by about 6 percent, despite a minor increase in the area planted. The production decline largely reflects unfavourable climatic conditions, with significant decreases in the outputs of onions (-24 percent) and pineapples (-32 percent). However, rice production, produced in relatively small amounts, increased by 84 percent to 1 186 tonnes.

Production of sugar cane, a significant export earner, rose by 6 percent in 2014, as higher yields more than offset a decrease in the area harvested. Historically, sugar cane cultivation was the main agricultural activity in Mauritius. Following a cut in the European Union's guaranteed sugar price (leading to a fall in sugar prices by 36 percent between 2005 and 2009), falling production levels and the global food price crisis, the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security emphasized the need to diversify the agricultural sector.

Fruit production consists mainly of banana, pineapple, litchi and mango which meets just under 50 percent of the country's requirements. Livestock production produces about 5 percent of the requirements in meat and 2 percent in milk. The Government is working towards making the dairy sector more technological, upgrading small regional cow breeding cooperatives and attracting investment in animal feed production.

Inflation rate declines at start of 2015

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) eased during the first four months of 2015, declining by 1 percent between March and April. In April, the year-on-year rate stood at 2.2 percent, compared to 4 percent a year earlier. Relying on imports for about 70 percent of the country's food requirements, Mauritius is particularly vulnerable to rising global food prices. Since the 2008 global food price crisis, the Government has been pushing the agriculture sector to boost food production to increase the country's self-sufficiency. A reasonable level of success has already been achieved, with farmers producing almost 100 percent of the country's needs in fresh vegetables, 60 percent in potatoes and about one-third in onions.



Reference Date: 08-August-2014

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

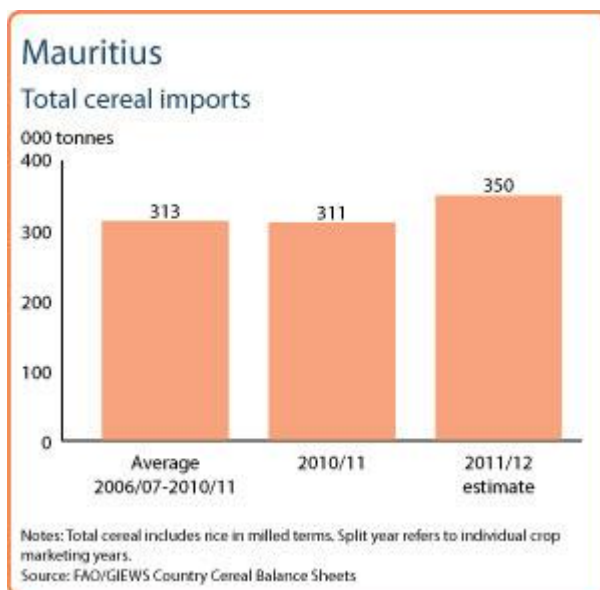
- Food and sugar cane production register small declines in 2013
- Inflation declines moderately in 2014

Food production decreases in 2013

The country meets the bulk of its cereal requirement with imports. Domestic food production, mainly vegetables and fruits, registered a small 3 percent decline in 2013, despite a marginal increase in the area planted. Reduced production of potatoes and tomatoes, due to unfavourable weather conditions, mainly account for the lower overall output last year. Similarly, production of sugar cane, a significant export earner, decreased by 3 percent, as a result of lower yields and smaller plantings. Consequently, sugar production declined marginally in 2013.

Inflation falls moderately in second quarter of 2014

The consumer price index decreased marginally in June 2014 by 1 percent compared to the level in March. Lower prices of vegetables largely account for this fall, but further declines were prevented due to higher prices of fish, fruits and other food products. On an annual basis, the inflation rate in June was about 3 percent higher.



Reference Date: 11-February-2014

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

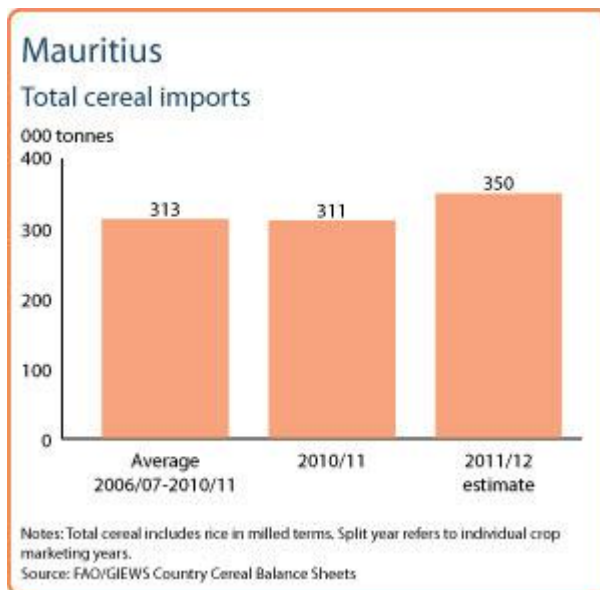
- Food prices rise marginally towards the end of 2013, but overall national inflation rate remains stable

Food production declines in first half of 2013

The country meets the bulk of its cereal requirement with imports. Domestic food production recorded a moderate decline in the first six months of 2013, despite an expansion in the area under cultivation. By contrast, sugar cane production increased by nearly two-fold over the same period.

Inflation remains generally stable in 2013, but food prices show some increases

The annual inflation rate in December 2013 stood at 4.1 percent, slightly up on the previous month, while the average rate for 2013 was down compared to the previous year. The upward movement at the end of 2013 stemmed partly from increasing food prices, particularly for vegetables.



Reference Date: 17-July-2012

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- In 2011 food production (mainly roots and vegetables) increased marginally, although smaller plantings contributed to a reduced maize harvest
- Food prices rise marginally, but the national inflation rate remains stable

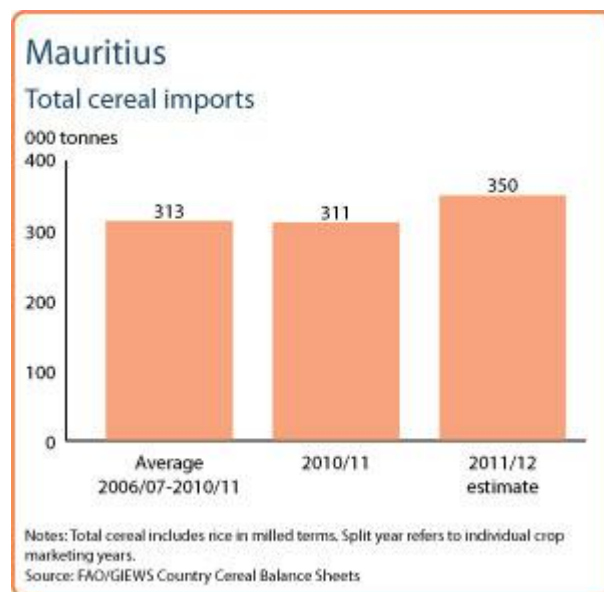
Marginal increase in the 2011 food crop production, while the more important sugarcane production declined slightly

Food crop production, consisting mainly of roots and vegetables, increased in 2011, as a result of improved yields, which more than compensated for a smaller planted area. Maize production, which is the only cereal grown in the country and accounts for about 10 percent of the national consumption requirements, declined fractionally. Total food production is estimated at approximately 116 000 tonnes for 2011, compared to 115 000 tonnes in the previous year.

Sugarcane, the main cash crop in the country, is grown on about 90 percent of the cultivated land area and accounts for approximately 25 percent of the country's export earnings. In 2011, sugarcane production, estimated at 4.23 million tonnes, declined marginally compared to the output in 2010, as a result of a smaller area planted.

Inflation remains generally stable in 2012, but food prices show some increase

The annual inflation rate in June 2012 stood at 4 percent, reflecting marginally higher food prices, particularly vegetables, bread, fish, and rice. While the monthly inflation rate since the start of 2012 has been stable, increasing by less than 1 percent.



Reference Date: 26-March-2012

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- In 2011 food production (mainly roots and vegetables) increased marginally, although smaller plantings contributed to a reduced maize harvest
- Production of sugarcane, the country's main cash crop, declined in 2011
- Lower rate of inflation recorded at the start of 2012

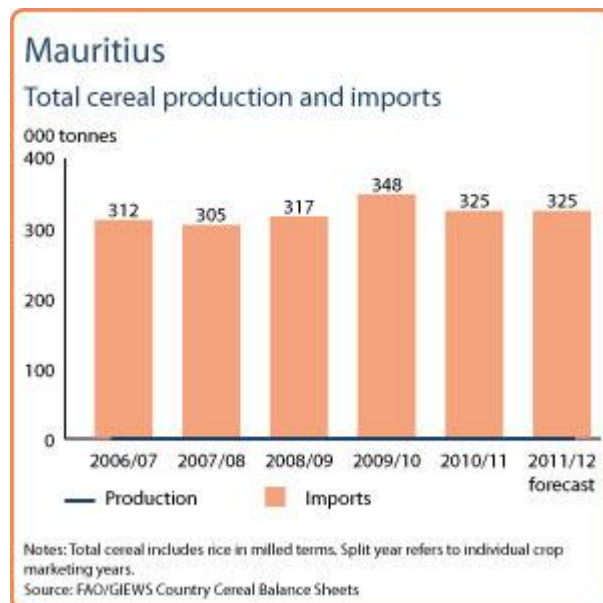
Marginal increase in the 2011 food crop production, while the more important sugarcane production declined slightly

Food crop production, consisting mainly of roots and vegetables, increased in 2011, as a result of improved yields, which more than compensated for a smaller planted area. Maize production, which is the only cereal grown in the country and accounts for about 10 percent of the national consumption requirements, declined fractionally. Total food production is estimated at approximately 116 000 tonnes for 2011, compared to 115 000 tonnes in the previous year.

Sugarcane, the main cash crop in the country, is grown on about 90 percent of the cultivated land area and accounts for approximately 25 percent of the country's export earnings. In 2011, sugarcane production, estimated at 4.23 million tonnes, declined marginally compared to the output in 2010, as a result of a smaller area planted.

Prices remain unchanged during the start of 2012

The annual inflation rate, at 6.2 percent, slowed in February 2012 compared to the higher rates recorded during the last quarter of 2012 and the CPI remained unchanged relative to January's level. During the first two months of the year, there was also a slight drop in the month-on-month food inflation rate.



Reference Date: 20-January-2012

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Production of sugarcane, the country's main cash crop, declined in first half of 2011
- Food inflation increases in 2011

Sugarcane production falls in first half of 2011

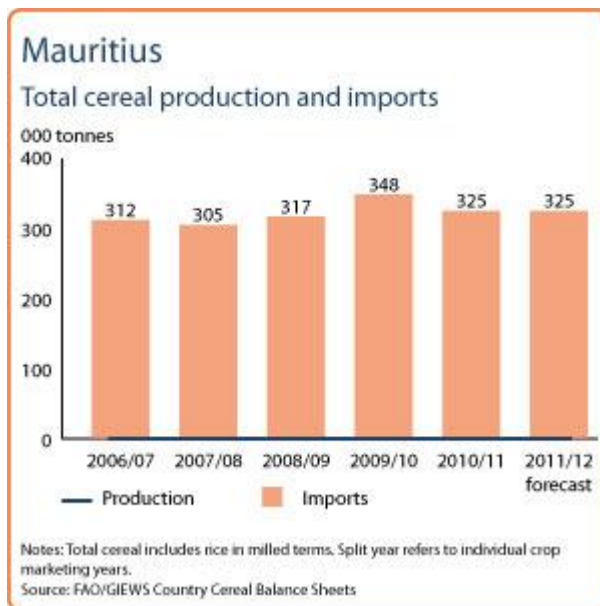
Sugarcane, the main cash crop in the country, is grown on about 90 percent of the cultivated land area accounting for approximately 25 percent of the country's export earnings. In the first half of 2011 (January-June), sugarcane production, estimated at about 262 000 tonnes, fell by just under 30 percent compared with 2010. The drop follows both a contraction in the area planted and a fall in yields.

Food crop production however, was marginally higher, despite smaller plantings, benefiting from an increase in yields. Total food production is estimated at approximately 42 000 tonnes.

Commercial imports of cereals are estimated at 325 000 tonnes and account for virtually all of the country's requirements.

Higher food prices during 2011

The year-on-year inflation rate for the food (and non-alcoholic beverages) was up by about 4 percent in December 2011. The higher rate was driven by rising prices of meat and dairy products.



Reference Date: 25-May-2011

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Production of food crops and sugarcane, the country's main cash crop, decline in 2010
- Higher food prices in early 2011 compared with the same period last year

Food and cash crop production fall in 2010

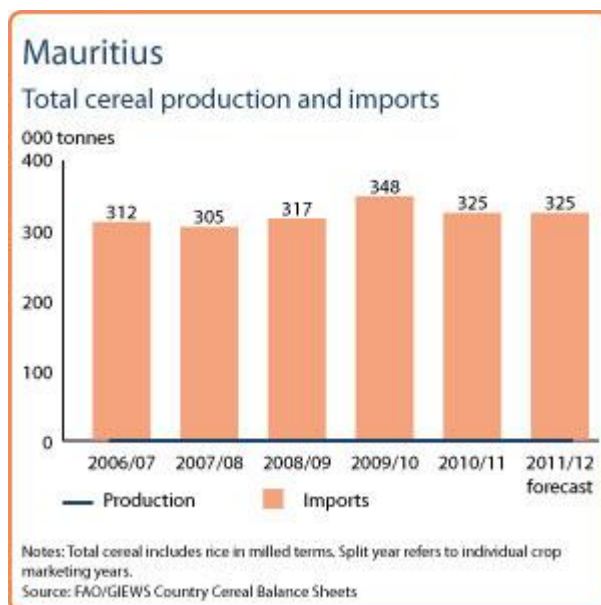
Sugarcane, the main cash crop, is grown on about 90 percent of the cultivated land area accounting for approximately 25 percent of the country's export earnings. Sugarcane production for 2010 is estimated at approximately 4.37 million tonnes, representing a decline of 6 percent relative to the previous year. Food crop production also declined last year, on account of both a contraction in area planted and a decrease in yields.

Cereal imports unchanged in 2011

Almost the all cereal consumption requirements are satisfied with commercial imports, with only a small quantity of maize produced. Current cereal imports, mostly wheat, for 2011 are estimated at about 330 000 tonnes.

Higher food prices during the beginning of the year

The food (and non-alcoholic beverages) price sub-index of the national CPI increased by about 7 percent in April 2011, relative to the same month one year earlier. However the index fell in April was lower than the previous month, on account of a decrease in the price of rice and vegetables.



Reference Date: 20-March-2010

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Very little cereal amount is produced in the sugarcane dominated farming system of the island.
- The entire cereal import requirement, estimated at about 320 000 tonnes for 2009, is expected to be met through commercial imports.
- Inflation and trade deficit down in 2009 mainly due to lower food and oil prices and sharp increase in the price of sugar, the country's dominant export earning commodity.

Very little cereal amount is produced in the sugarcane dominated farming system

Sugarcane, the main cash crop, is grown on about 90 percent of the cultivated land area and accounts for 25 percent of the country's export earnings. The loss of preferential access to US and European markets in 2004 had negative consequences for sugar and textile industries in the country as these two commodities are the most important exports.

In June 2008, in response to the global rise of food prices which lead to high food inflation in the country and severely impacted on the purchasing power of low income groups, the Mauritius Government developed a strategy to foster local production and to reduce the dependency on imported food commodities. Among the measures foreseen in the strategy is the promotion of partnership with countries in the region to produce food and other products for domestic consumption in Mauritius and for regional markets. One such initiative has been implemented in 2009 in Mozambique where Mauritius has secured 20 000 hectares to produce rice.

Cereal import requirement up in 2009 in line with population growth

Total cereal import requirements (mostly wheat, rice and maize) for 2009 are estimated to have risen marginally to about 320 000 tonnes. The country imports commercially virtually its entire cereal consumption requirements.

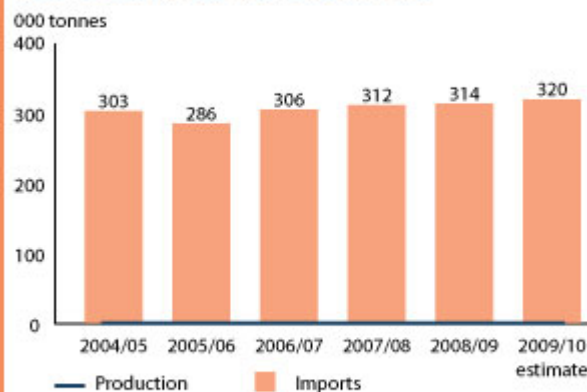
Annual rate of inflation and trade deficit sharply down from year earlier

The annual rate of inflation in Mauritius fell in 2009 from 9.7 in 2008 to 2.5 percent, mostly due to lower food and oil import prices. The year-to-year change in the food and non-alcoholic component of the consumer price index fell to 1.2 percent in December 2009 after peaking at 15.9 percent in October 2008.

Mauritius's trade deficit fell by 12 percent in 2009 compared to the previous year, mainly owing to lower prices for food and oil imports, while the value of exports were up mainly reflecting higher returns from sugar, following the almost doubling of international sugar prices in 2009.

Mauritius

Total cereal production and imports



Notes: Total cereal includes rice in milled terms. Split year refers to individual crop marketing years.

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets

Reference Date: 15-January-2010

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Very little cereal amount is produced in the sugarcane dominated farming system of the island
- The entire cereal import requirement, estimated at about 320 000 tonnes for 2009, is expected to be met through commercial imports
- Inflation and trade deficit down in 2009 mainly due to lower food and oil prices and sharp increase in the price of sugar, the country's dominant export earning commodity

Very little cereal amount is produced in the sugarcane dominated farming system

Sugarcane, the main cash crop, is grown on about 90 percent of the cultivated land area and accounts for 25 percent of the country's export earnings. The loss of preferential access to US and European markets in 2004 had negative consequences for sugar and textile industries in the country as these two commodities are the most important exports.

In June 2008, in response to the global rise of food prices which lead to high food inflation in the country and severely impacted on the purchasing power of low income groups, the Mauritius Government developed a strategy to foster local production and to reduce the dependency on imported food commodities. Among the measures foreseen in the strategy is the promotion of partnership with countries in the region to produce food and other products for domestic consumption in Mauritius and for regional markets. One such initiative has been implemented in 2009 in Mozambique where Mauritius has secured 20 000 hectares to produce rice.

Cereal import requirement up in 2009 in line with population growth

Total cereal import requirements (mostly wheat, rice and maize) for 2009 are expected to rise marginally to about 320 000 tonnes. The country imports commercially virtually its entire cereal consumption requirements.

Annual rate of inflation and trade deficit sharply down from year earlier, mostly due to lower food and oil prices and higher sugar prices

The annual rate of inflation in Mauritius fell in 2009 from 9.7 to 2.5 percent, mostly due to lower food and oil import prices. The year-to-year change in the food and non-alcoholic component of the consumer price index fell to 1.2 percent in December 2009 after peaking at 15.9 percent in October 2008.

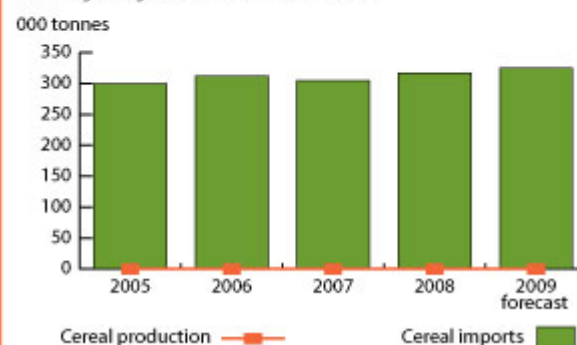
Mauritius's trade deficit fell by 23 percent year on year in the first nine months of 2009, mainly owing to lower world food and oil prices, while exports of clothing, sugar and fish were up.

In recent months international sugar prices have reversed their downward direction. They almost doubled from December 2008 to December 2009 from USD .26 cents per kg to USD .51 cents per kg.

Mauritius Cereal production and imports

Cereal production	2004-2008 average	2008	2009 forecast	change* 2009/2008
	000 tonnes			percent

* Percentage change calculated from unrounded data.



Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets

Reference Date: 10-June-2009

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Very little cereal amount is produced in the sugarcane dominated farming system of the island.
- The entire cereal import requirement, estimated at about 320 000 tonnes, is expected to be met through commercial imports.
- Price of sugar, the country's dominant import earning commodity, has moved up in recent months.

Very little cereal amount is produced in the sugarcane dominated farming system

Sugarcane, the main cash crop, is grown on about 90 percent of the cultivated land area and accounts for 25 percent of the country's export earnings. The loss of preferential access to US and European markets had negative consequences for sugar and textile industries in the country as these two commodities are the most important exports.

Cereal import requirement up in line with population growth

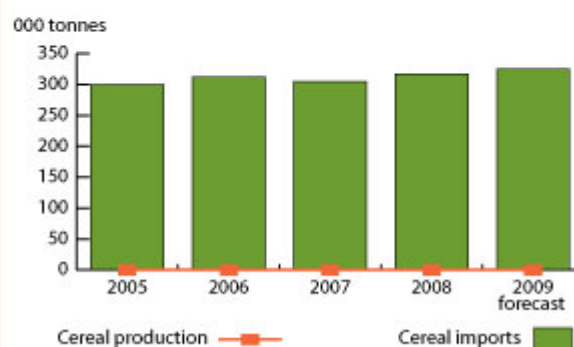
Total cereal import requirements for 2009 in Mauritius are expected to rise to about 320 000 tonnes. The country imports commercially virtually its entire cereal consumption requirements.

Price of sugar, the country's dominant import earning commodity, has moved up in recent months

In recent months international sugar prices have reversed their downward direction and moved from USD .24 cents per kg in November 2008 to a three-year high of USD .32 cents per kg in May 2009 (based on the Food Outlook, June 2009). Also an increase in sugar production is expected in Mauritius this year. Although the country achieved a sustained high growth rates for the last two decades, the growth in exports of goods and services is expected to go down to -6.6 percent in 2009 (the Economist Intelligence Unit).

Cereal production and imports Mauritius

Cereal production	2004-2008 average	2008	2009 forecast	change 2009/2008
	000 tonnes			percent



Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets