

THIS REPORT CONTAINS ASSESSMENTS OF COMMODITY AND TRADE ISSUES MADE BY USDA STAFF AND NOT NECESSARILY STATEMENTS OF OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Voluntary - Public

**Date:** 7/1/2010

**GAIN Report Number:**

## **Syria**

**Post:** Cairo

### **Yellow Rust Impacts Syria Wheat Crop**

**Report Categories:**

Grain and Feed

**Approved By:**

Jonathan P Gressel

**Prepared By:**

Jonathan P Gressel

**Report Highlights:**

The Syrian wheat crop was severely affected by Yellow Rust. Locally developed soft wheat varieties were most severely affected by the rust. Yield has been severely reduced. Some farmers had to plow under their fields because the yield was so low. Use of fungicides was not practical. A frost for three consecutive nights in late March 2010 had a bad effect on the crop that was already suffering from abnormal climatic conditions. Low rainfall in some areas was also a problem for rain fed plantations. The wheat crop ended up being only about 70 percent of the size of the expected record crop. It is estimated at 3.5-3.8 million tons of wheat. The private sector is expected to continue to import wheat because it is about half the local wheat price. The Black Sea origins are expected to be the major suppliers due to relatively cheap prices and low freight cost.

## General Information:

Syria was expecting a record crop of 4.5-5.0 million tons. However, the Yellow Rust infestation that badly affected soft wheat varieties was detrimental to the crop. The rust infestation started in February with high soil moisture content and above normal temperatures that speeded crop development. Over seeding, over irrigation in irrigated areas, and the use of excessive amounts of nitrogen fertilizers may have increased the rust infestation. The presence of dew in the mornings as well as rainfall in Northeast Syria in early May exacerbated the problems. Hard wheat fields were much more tolerant to the rust that was evident not only in Syria but in neighboring countries too. Chemical control was not feasible. The shortage of rainfall in Northeast Syria for about six weeks during the growing period in March and April also badly affected wheat grown under rain fed conditions and reduced the yield.

Wheat production in 2010/2011 is estimated by the Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform at 3.3 million tons, 70 percent of his estimate of a few months ago. The crop was very early in maturity due to the prevailing abnormal climatic conditions. Harvesting started in early May. The public sector General Establishment for Cereal Processing and Trade (HOBOOB), bought 2.2 million tons of wheat from the local crop by mid-June 2010 at very high prices, about double the international market prices. The private sector is estimated to hold about one million tons in production areas for local trading and milling as well as for sowing the next crop. The General Organization for Seed Multiplication is expected to buy about 200,000 MT at premium prices for seeding the next crop. HOBOOB confiscated a few thousand tons of imported wheat that was blended with the local wheat to make use of the differences in prices. Fires in some wheat fields were reported in June 2010 due to the high prevailing temperatures and added to the problems of the wheat producers. The preliminary estimate for the crop is around 3.5-3.8 million tons.

Planted area was reported at about 1.7 million hectares, but not all the area was harvested. Some fields were plowed under after the infestation was evident to make use of the land for other crops. However, a good part of the area that was infected by the rust was harvested due to the excellent prices offered by HOBOOB.

For more information on Yellow Rust in the Middle East:

<http://www.pecad.fas.usda.gov/highlights/2010/06/Middle%20East/>

Wheat Syria	2008/2009			2009/2010			2010/2011		
	Market Year Begin: Jul 2008			Market Year Begin: Jul 2009			Market Year Begin: Jul 2010		
	USDA Official	Old Post	New Post	USDA Official	Old Post	New Post	USDA Official	Old Post	New Post
Area Harvested	1,486	800	800	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,350	1,700	1,500
Beginning Stocks	3,574	2,933	3,574	2,713	1,133	2,513	3,863	2,333	2,913
Production	2,139	2,000	2,139	4,000	4,000	4,000	3,750	4,500	3,600
MY Imports	1,700	1,000	1,500	2,000	2,000	1,200	2,000	1,000	1,200
TY Imports	1,700	1,000	1,500	2,000	2,000	1,200	2,000	1,000	1,200
TY Imp. from U.S.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Supply	7,413	5,933	7,213	8,713	7,133	7,713	9,613	7,833	7,713
MY Exports	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TY Exports	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Feed and Residual	400	500	400	400	400	400	600	400	500

FSI Consumption	4,300	4,300	4,300	4,450	4,400	4,400	4,600	4,400	4,500
Total Consumption	4,700	4,800	4,700	4,850	4,800	4,800	5,200	4,800	5,000
Ending Stocks	2,713	1,133	2,513	3,863	2,333	2,913	4,413	3,033	2,713
Total Distribution	7,413	5,933	7,213	8,713	7,133	7,713	9,613	7,833	7,713