Crop Situation Update - 5

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Field update on the status of the winter crops

Following the WFP supported National Crop and Food Security Assessment conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives (MoAC) in November 2006, a joint FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment (CSFAM) is currently ongoing (from 19 March – 6 April) to assess the condition of the winter crop and develop recommendations on an appropriate national response to localized crop failures and drought. The assessment team has been visiting districts in the Mid-West, West, Central and Eastern Development Regions of the country. The next Crop Situation Update will provide a summary of the main findings.

This issue of the Crop Situation Update provides an overview of the current outlook for the production of the main winter crops, wheat and barley, in 36 districts covered by the field surveillance activities of the WFP Food Security Monitoring and Analysis System.

RAINFALL

From November until mid-December the rainfall was normal in most of the country. Germination of seeds therefore was good with a few exceptions in some areas in the Far- and Mid-West, such as Humla, Kalikot, northern parts of Bajura and Dailekh, northern and western parts of Pyuthan, and in upland areas of Achham districts where rainfall was inadequate. During the period mid-December to mid-February rainfall across the country was largely absent, affecting the growth of the winter crops (see Chart 1 and Table 1). At the end of January, farmers, particularly in the Hill and Mountain areas of the Far- and Mid West, expected a serious decline in crop production. Fortunately, regular rainfall resumed during the second half of February, which considerably improved the outlook for the winter crop situation.

Wheat Production in Terai Districts--2006 and 2007

Districts	Area (Ha.)		Yield (MT/Ha.)		Production (MT)		Differences (+%)		
	Last year	This year	Last year	This year	Last year	This year	Area	Yield	Production
Saptari	12,500	30,450	2.04	1.85	25,500	56,332	143.60	(9.31)	120.91
Siraha	15,800	20,000	2.10	2.50	33,180	50,000	26.58	19.05	50.69
Dhanusha	25,500	30,000	2.06	2.40	52,400	72,000	17.65	16.79	37.40
Bara	28,545	28,945	2.84	3.90	81,068	112,886	1.40	37.32	39.25
Parsa	23,500	23,500	2.58	3.70	60,536	86,950	-	43.63	43.63
Nawalparasi	18,745	19,830	2.14	2.30	40,100	45,609	5.79	7.53	13.74
Rupandehi	30,400	30,500	2.38	2.85	72,400	86,925	0.33	19.65	20.06
Banke	12,282	16,731	2.21	2.50	27,143	41,828	36.22	13.12	54.10
Bardiya	17,800	18,200	2.40	2.70	42,720	49,140	2.25	12.50	15.03
Total					**435,047**	**601,670**			**38.30**

Table 2 – Wheat production in the Terai

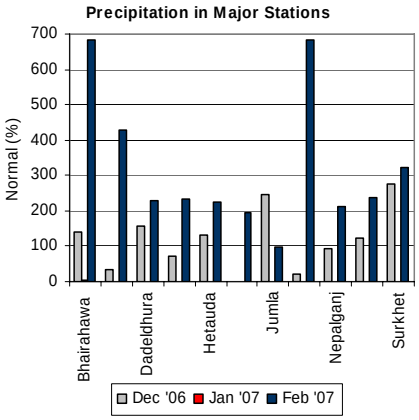


Chart 1 – Rainfall situation

Stations	Dec '06	Jan '07	Feb '07
Bhairahawa	138.8	5.1	683.0
Biratnagar	32.0	0.0	430.0
Dadeldhura	155.0	0.0	229.0
Dipayal	74.2	0.0	235.0
Hetauda	133.0	0.0	224.0
Janakpur	0.0	0.0	193.6
Jumla	246.9	0.0	96.3
Kankai	21.0	0.0	683.0
Nepalganj	93.9	0.0	210.5
Nuwakot	123.0	0.0	236.0
Surkhet	274.4	0.0	323.2

Table 1 – Rainfall situation

CROP SITUATION OVERVIEW

Wheat is the most important winter crop, followed by barley. Wheat is cultivated across the country while production of barley is mainly concentrated in the High Hill and Mountain areas.

Planting was mostly completed in November in the Terai and Hill districts, whereas it continued until the end of December in the High Hill and Mountain areas. Most crops are currently in the growing stage. However, harvesting of wheat has started in several areas in the Terai. In the Hills, harvesting will commence at the end of April while in the Mountains it will start in May.

As a total of 109,855 hectares of paddy land (7.09% of total) was left fallow during the summer period due to drought conditions (National Crop and Food Security Assessment, MoAC, Feb 2006), farmers in the Eastern Terai were able to considerably increase the total land under wheat cultivation compared to last year. Taking into consideration the increase of land under cultivation and favourable weather conditions, the MoAC's early estimate for wheat production is 1.5 million MT (7.6% increase compared to last year). Data from District Offices of the Department of Agriculture (DADO) from nine[1] Terai districts indicate an increase of 38% in the production of wheat compared to last year (see Table 2).

[1] Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha, Bara, Parsa, Nawalparasi, Rupandehi, Banke and Bardiya

However, despite the good crop situation in the Terai, several Hill and Mountain districts in the Mid- and Far-Western Development Regions were badly affected by drought, hailstorm, late snowfall, excessive rainfall, and/or pests, which led to substantial localized decreases in winter crop production in these districts, and as such, will have implications for the food security situation in these areas. Details are presented in the District Updates below.

WHEAT PRODUCTION

Map 1 and 2 depict the current wheat crop condition as reported by WFP field monitors (normal or good, moderate, poor, very poor and failure) at the sub-district level for West and East Nepal.

Planting, germination and initial growth of the wheat crop was normal to good in most of the country as a result of moist soil conditions providing favourable sowing and growing conditions during November and December 2006.

In the Eastern Terai districts of Saptari and Siraha, the area under wheat cultivation increased considerably this year compared to last (see Table 2). In Saptari wheat coverage increased by 143.6%. Likewise in Siraha the area under wheat cultivation increased by 26.6%. There is however a distinct difference between the yield of irrigated and unirrigated areas, with crop conditions in the rainfed areas more affected by the dry spell during mid-December until mid-February. Overall conditions in the Terai are favourable, which may help assist marginal farmers in these areas overcome part of their losses incurred when the summer paddy production was severely affected by the drought.

Nathuni Yadav, (harvesting wheat), Siraha
Photo: Kanta Khanal

As is evident from Map 1 and 2, crop conditions in most of the Hill and Mountain districts in the Eastern and Central Development Regions are normal. Only a few VDCs in Kavre and Rasuwa reported a decrease in production due to pest and low quality seed.

The Western and Mid-Western Terai districts reported normal or good crop conditions.

In the Karnali, production is normal except for Humla and the northern tip of Kalikot.

Wheat crop condition in southern tip of Humla District
Photo: Subhash Singh

In the Hill districts of the Mid-West the situation is very similar to last year's with the wheat crops in Dailekh, Jajarkot, and Pyuthan affected by drought, hailstorm, excessive rainfall, and disease (*Sindure*). Particularly the northern parts of Dailekh and Jajarkot are experiencing heavy crop losses in the range of 40 to 60%.

The outlook for the Far-Western region is normal to poor with an average decrease in production of around 20-30% (DADO). Fortunately compared to last year this is a slight improvement. The exception is Bajura where the current wheat production is again failing due to ongoing drought conditions.

The following provides a summary of the key areas where wheat production is expected to decrease substantially as a consequence of drought and other damaging factors.

DISTRICTS UPDATES - WHEAT

-------- Mid-western Region --------

Kalikot –Two months of drought adversely affected the crop in the upland areas. Production is estimated to decrease by more than 60% in Nanikot, and Dhoulagoh VDCs and by around 50% in Khina, Ramnakot, Thirpu, Chhapre, and Daha VDCs.

Humla – Drought has severely affected wheat production in the southern tip of Humla. Crop production is estimated to decrease by 40% in Maila, Madana, Kalika, Shrinagar, and Jaira VDCs.

Dailekh – Due to the impact of drought, hailstorm, heavy rainfall, and disease (*Sindure*) the wheat production is estimated to decrease by about 60% in Bisalla, Meheltoli, Kasikandh, Salleri, Dwari, Kusapani, Jambukandh, Chauratha, Awalparajul, Rum, Jagannath, Seri, Chamunda, Sattala, Baraha, and Pagnath VDCs.

Jajarkot – Bhagawati, Ragda, Sakla, Nayakbada, Rokayagaun, Paink, Daha, Garkhakot, Pajaru, Kortang, Talegaun, and Archhani VDCs were hit by a hailstorm in December 2006, followed by snowfall in February 2007. Production may decrease by 60%. Additionally, the crops in the south-eastern VDCs were affected by rust (*Sindure*) disease.

------- Far-western Region ----------

Bajura – Wheat crop germination was good but the drought conditions between mid-December and mid-February highly affected the growth of the plants in the northern, eastern, and western parts of the district. The production in Bichhiya, Rugin, Bandhu, Jagannath, Sappata, Gotri, Dahakot, and Manakot VDCs is estimated to decrease by about 50%.

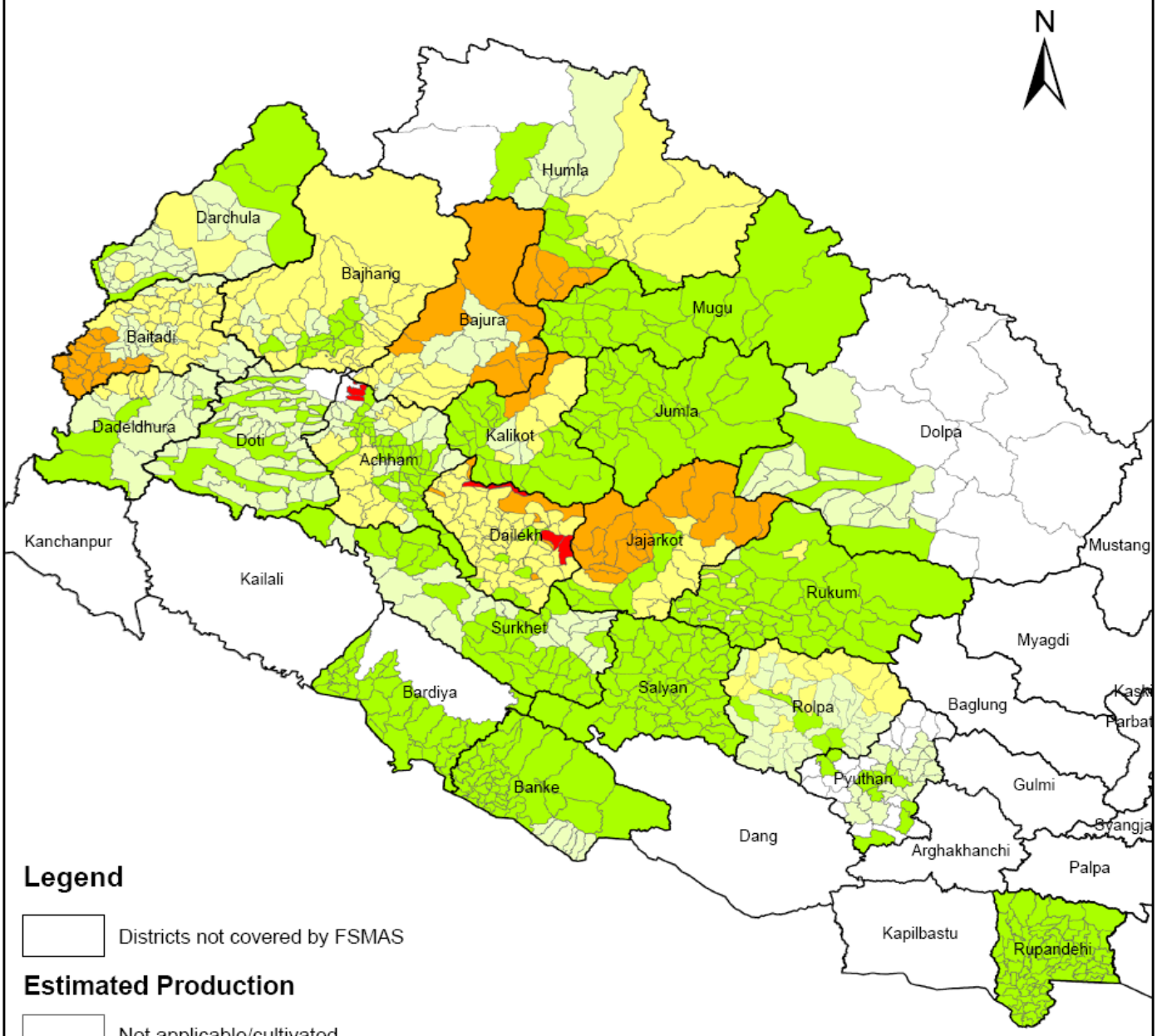
Achham – People in Khaptad VDC Ward No. 5, 6 and in Devisthan VDC Ward No. 9 left most land fallow demanding resettlement following the landslide on 27 August 2006. The production is estimated to decrease by 30-45% in the VDCs in the south-western part of the district and in Thanti, Rishidaha, Bindyabasini, and Shodasa VDCs in the north.

Baitadi – The production of wheat in 16 VDCs in the south-western part of the district is likely to decrease by 45-50% due to lack of irrigation and inadequate rainfall. Only 18% of land is irrigated in this area.

Map 1

Wheat Crop Situation Map

Period January - March 2007
West Nepal



Legend

- Districts not covered by FSMAS

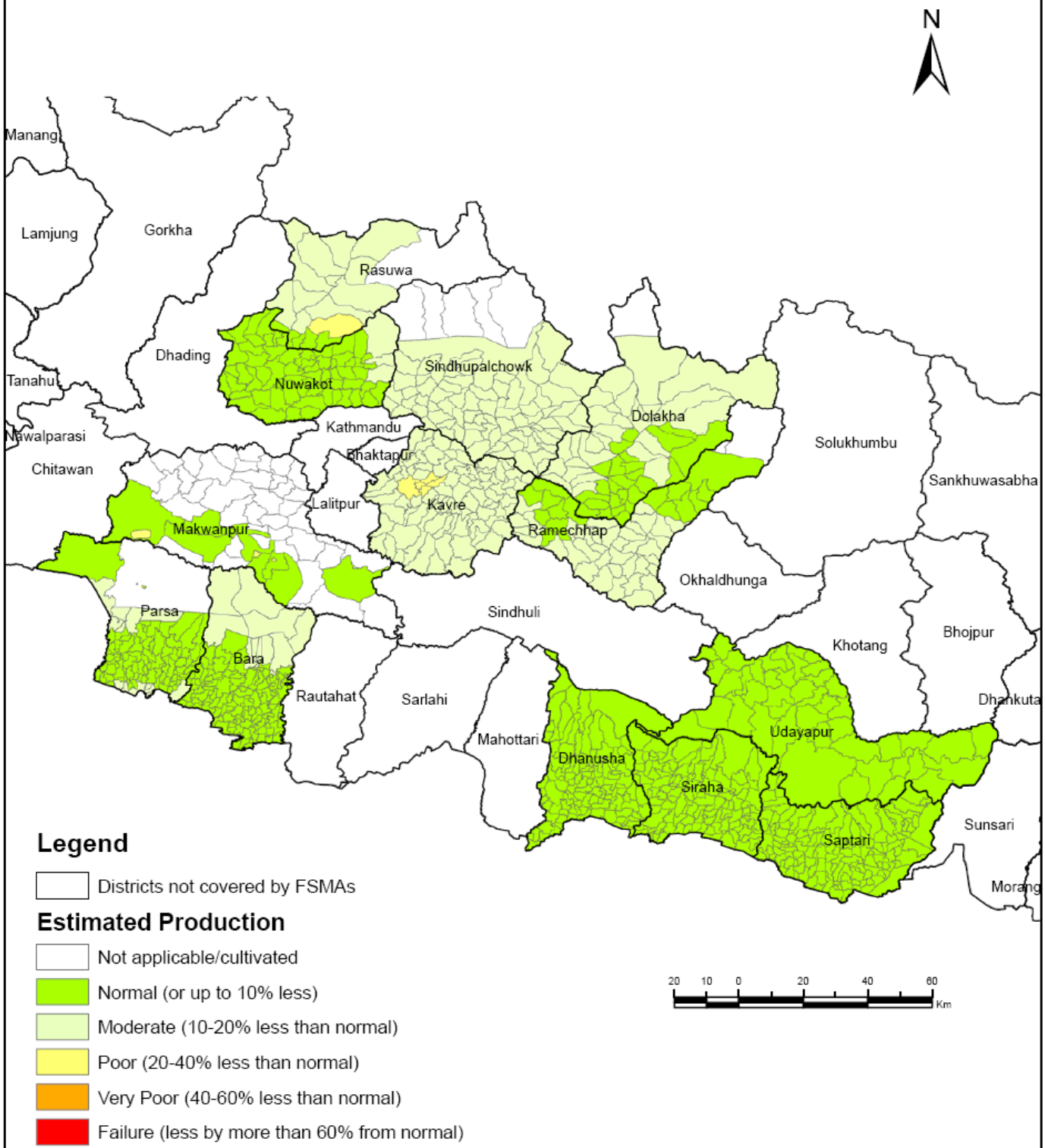
Estimated Production

- Not applicable/cultivated
- Normal (or up to 10% less)
- Moderate (10-20% less than normal)
- Poor (20-40% less than normal)
- Very Poor (40-60% less than normal)
- Failure (less by more than 60% from normal)

Map 2

Wheat Crop Situation Map

Period January - March 2007
East Nepal



BARLEY PRODUCTION

Barley is mainly cultivated in the Mountain and High Hills of the Far- and Mid-Western Regions, including Darchula, Bajhang, Bajura, Achham, Jumla, Humla, Kalikot, Mugu, Dolpa, Dailekh, Rukum, Rolpa, Jajarkot, and Salyan districts. Barley is the main winter crop in Jumla district. The production is estimated to be normal this year.

In the Central and Eastern Regions, barley is only cultivated in the districts of Rasuwa and Nuwakot.

Barley is often used as an animal feed and only in a few mountain districts, such as in Humla, Jumla, Dolpa, Mugu, Kalikot and upper Bajhang, Bajura and Rolpa, it is used as a cereal for human consumption.

The following provides a summary regarding the main areas of concern for barley production.

DISTRICTS UPDATES – BARLEY

------ Mid-western Region ----------

Kalikot – Due to drought and lack of irrigation, the production is expected to decrease up to 70% in Nanikot and Dhoulagoh; and 50% in Khina, Thirpu, Ramnakot, Chhapre, and Daha VDCs. Barley is grown in 30% of areable land.

Dailekh – The production is expected to decrease by around 60% in some parts of Bisalla, Salleri, Chauratha, Kasikandh, Dwari, Meheltoli, Jagannath, Katti, Lalilkanda, Bhairikalikathum, and Raniban VDCs as the crop was affected by drought, hailstorm, heavy rainfall, and disease (rust).

Jajarkot – Overall a 50% crop reduction is estimated. Most affected are the VDCs in the north and Punma, Bhur, and Jagatipur VDCs in the south. The crop is expected to decrease by about 60-70% in these areas due to drought.

Rolpa – Barley is cultivated as a cereal crop in the upper belt of Rolpa. The barley production in the VDCs Gam, Sheram, Uwa, Thabang, Mirul, Kureli, Rangkot, Pachhabang, Rank, and Pakhapani are affected (40% decrease) due to late rainfall.

-------- Far-western Region ---------

Bajura – The production of barley is expected to decrease by around 60% VDCs like Bichhiya, Rugin, Bandhu, Dahakot, Manakot, Gotri, Sappata, Jagannath, and parts of Bandhu, Wai, and Jukot VDCs. Barley is cultivated in 50% of the available agricultural areas in these VDCs.

Baitadi – The production is expected to decrease by 50-60% in rain-fed areas in 16 VDCs in the west of the district. Farmers were unable to plant barley on time due to late rainfall in the area.

OTHER CROPS

Other important crops, such as potatoes are also cultivated during the winter period. Harvesting of potatoes has been going on in the lower part of Dolakha. In this district, the production may decrease 10-15% due to rust infestation. Rasuwa, Nuwakot, and Makwanpur reported normal potato production this season. Potato production decreased by 15% to 25% in Kavre and Sindhupalchowk districts respectively.

Maize planting has started in Udayapur, Dolakha, Ramechhap, and Rasuwa district.

CONCLUSION

At the national level, the outlook for wheat production is positive. Early estimates from the MoAC point towards the target output of 1.5 million Mt. This positive scenario can mainly be attributed to the increase in wheat production in the Terai. The situation is less positive in several Mountain and Hill districts in the Far- and Mid-West. The effects of drought, hailstorm, late snowfall, excessive rainfall, and pests have badly impacted local production. The cumulative effects of continuing drought conditions in these remote areas, where markets are not operational and labour mobility is extremely difficult, means that food security conditions remain precarious.

FAO and WFP are currently conducting a joint Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission (CFSAM) which examines the food security implications of drought affected areas. The next Crop Situation Update will provide a summary of the main findings.

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