

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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Report Number: BU2024-0017

Report Name: Bulgarian Corn Crop Estimated to be the Lowest in Over a Decade

Country: Bulgaria

Post: Sofia

Report Category: Grain and Feed

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Report Highlights:

FAS/Sofia has revised further downward its estimate for Bulgaria's MY 2024/25 corn crop to 1.7 million metric tons (MMT) based on the latest harvest data and which, if confirmed, will be the smallest crop since 2012. This is due to the severe summer heat and drought. Conversely, based on the latest harvest data the estimate for the barley crop is increased to 1.1 MMT (compared to 797,000 MT last year), the highest since 2004. Wheat production is also adjusted slightly upward to 7 MMT, based on the final harvest data. Abundant winter grains production, a much better quality of the crop, and favorable export demand have all led to a strong start to the export season. At the same time, MY 2024/25 corn exports and domestic use are forecast to decline sharply due to the local deficit and allegedly poor quality of the crop. Wheat and barley feed/industrial uses are expected to increase and compensate for the lower corn consumption.

Weather Overview

Since the middle of June and until the end of August, Bulgaria has been negatively affected by extreme hot and dry weather conditions. Overall, the months of June, July and August were much hotter than usual with below-average rainfall. Pollination, flowering, and the grain filling phases of corn were all affected. These conditions led to a drastic reversal of yield expectations to now being far below the 5-year average. The corn harvest campaign started early, in mid-August, because of the accelerated crop phenological development driven by this summer's hot and dry conditions, and with very low yield expectations.

Rainfall in September arrived too late for summer crops (corn) but improved the conditions for the sowing of winter crops for 2025 harvest. Rainfall increased in the first two weeks of September, when 20–60 mm was recorded in most regions, but the north-western regions remained dry. During this period, daily temperatures fluctuated above the long-term-average by 2–3° C. Recent rainfall in the first half of October favorably increased soil moisture content, thus improving the conditions for the seedbed preparation, sowing, and sprouting of winter grains. However, the northern regions still suffer from a rainfall deficit. ([JRC MARS Bulletin September 2024 Vol 32 №9](#), [Crop Explorer](#) and [Bulgaria data](#)).

MY 2024/25 Production Estimates

Wheat: The Ministry of Agriculture's (MinAg) latest weekly [data](#) reports that the wheat harvest was completed with 2.6 percent higher production and 4.4 percent higher average yields compared to MY 2023/24. The harvested production is reported at 6.76 MMT from 1,192,000 hectares (HA) (Table 1). (Note: This tentative weekly data is usually below the final official data which is reported by the national statistics and then Eurostat). Dry conditions supported timely harvest and improved wheat quality with milling wheat's share reported at above 70 percent (protein content above 12 percent for most wheat) compared to below 50 percent in MY 2023/24.

Private industry estimates of the wheat harvest are at 6.9 MMT to 7.0 MMT, with average yields of 5.87 MT/HA. As of the end of October, Eurostat carries a wheat production estimate of 6.995 MMT which is most likely based on data provided by the Bulgarian authorities. If this estimate is confirmed, the wheat crop in 2024 will be the second largest crop since 2000, just down from the 2021 record of 7.293 MMT.

Based on the above data and most industry estimates, FAS/Sofia increased its wheat area estimate to 1.193 MHA and revised slightly upward its wheat production to 7 MMT (Table 2), two percent above the MY 2023/24 level (6.855 MMT, Table 1), with average yields of 5.8 MT/HA. Further adjustments in this estimate are possible depending on the final official harvest data.

Barley: The MinAg's weekly [data](#) reports barley harvest completed with 39.9 percent higher production and 2.5 percent higher average yields compared to MY 2023/24. The harvested production is reported at 1.02 MMT (Table 1). The considerable growth in production is due to a 37-percent increase in area from MY 2023/24 to 188,000 HA. Similar to wheat, this tentative data is usually below the final official data which is reported by the national statistics and Eurostat. Dry conditions supported timely harvest and improved barley quality.

As of the end of October, Eurostat carries a barley production estimate of 1.05 MMT. If this estimate is confirmed, the barley crop in 2024 will be among the three highest crops since 2000, following 2002 production at 1.24 MMT and the 2004 crop at 1.21 MMT.

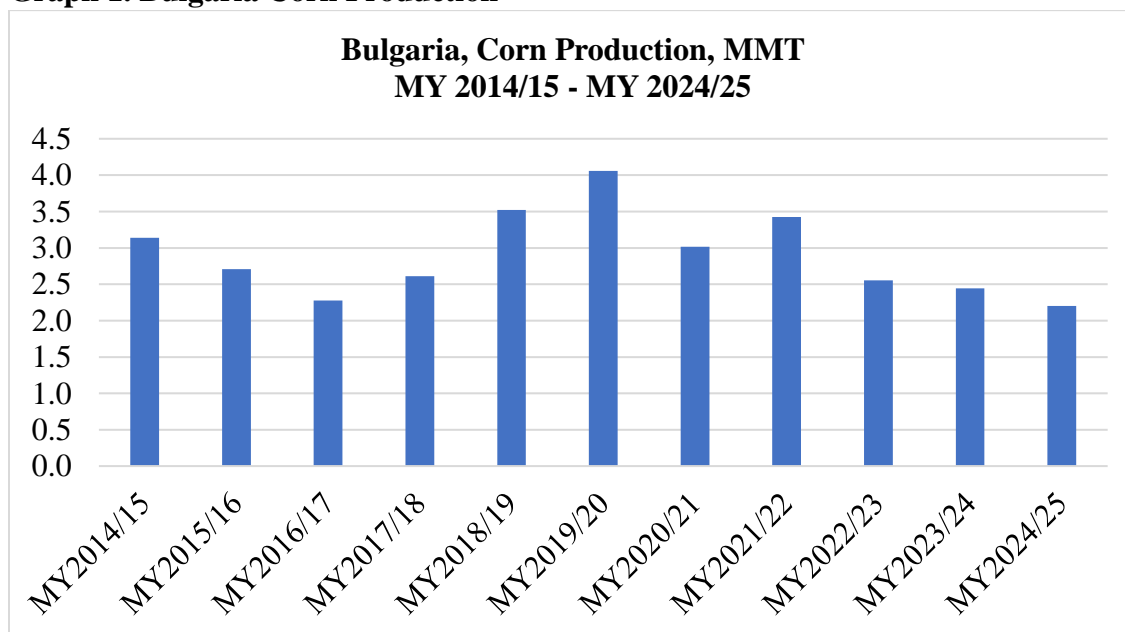
Based on the above data, FAS/Sofia increased the barley area estimate to 188,000 HA and the production estimate to 1.1 MMT (Table 2), with average yields of 5.85 MT/HA. If this production estimate is confirmed, barley production will be 38 percent above that in MY 2023/24 (797,000 MT)

Corn: Devastating summer weather in July and August has led to a drastic reduction in production estimates for corn. MY 2024/25 will be the third consecutive year of repeated heat and drought weather with corn yields far below average. In combination with low prices and negative margins, this has a significant impact on farmers’ intentions for future development. More than 90 percent of corn in the country is non-irrigated and new investments are slow and burdensome.

The MinAg’s latest weekly [reports](#) show area under corn at 510,000 HA, 4.7 percent less than in MY 2023/24. The EC MARS’ [bulletin](#) (September) reduced its previous estimates for the average corn yields sharply down from 5.37 MT/HA estimated in July to 3.39 MT/HA in September, 24 percent lower than in 2023, and 38 percent below the 5-year average (5.5 MT/HA). Most current private estimates for corn production in MY 2024/25 go from 1.3 MMT to as high as 1.9 MMT, compared to 2.45 MMT in MY 2023/24. As of the end of October, Eurostat carries a corn production estimate of 1.38 MMT which is likely based on data provided by the MinAg. The MinAg reported corn harvested as of October 10 on 89 percent of planted area with collected production at 1.238 MMT. As noted above, this is tentative harvest data which is usually much lower than the final harvest results. If Eurostat’s estimate is confirmed, the corn crop in 2024 will be the lowest since 2012 when the production was at 1.757 MMT and comparable to 2009 production when the crop was at 1.310 MMT.

FAS/Sofia has adjusted MY 2024/25 corn area to 510,000 HA based on official data and has revised the corn production estimate sharply downward to 1.7 MMT (Table 2) or 30 percent below that in MY 2023/24 (2.445 MT)(Graph 1), based on the above information. This estimate is subject to revision depending on the final official harvest data.

Graph 1. Bulgaria Corn Production



Source: Eurostat for MY 2014/15- MY 2023/24, FAS/Sofia estimate for MY 2024/25

MY 2025/26 Conditions

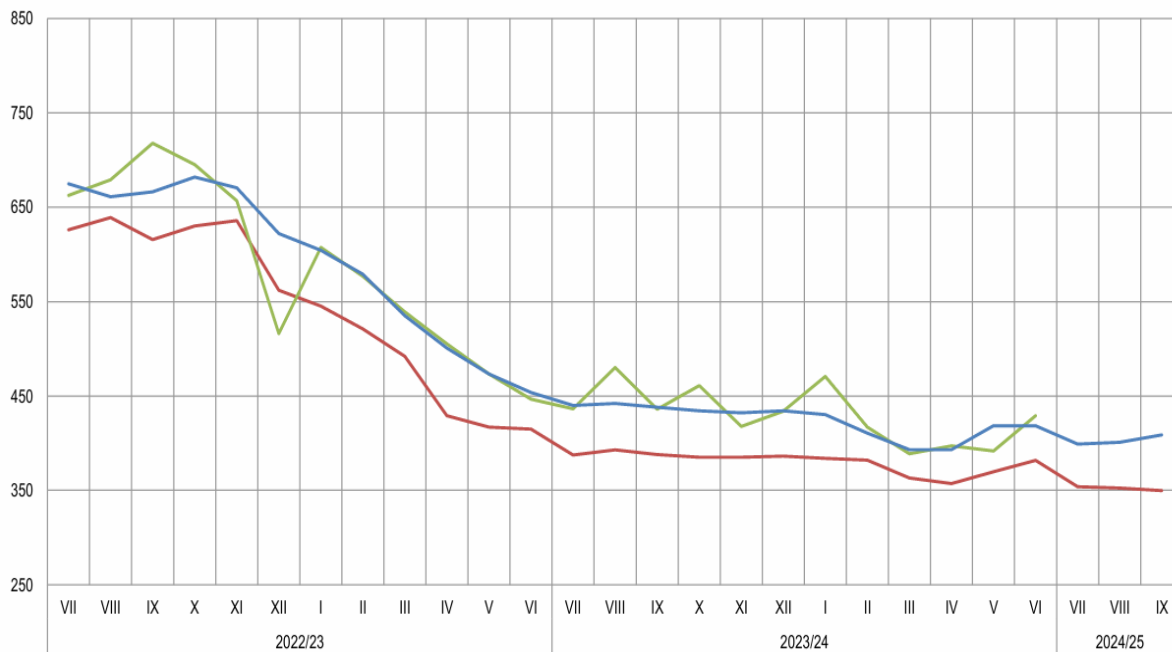
Long-awaited rainfall in the first half of September and in the first half of October provided much necessary soil moisture for the winter grain crop planting campaign. As of October 10, the MinAg reports that wheat planted area is 26 percent lower than a year ago while barley planted area is 35 percent less than a year ago. It is believed, however, that farmers will catch up and plant the usual amount of land under wheat, around 1.2 MHA, but may reduce the area under barley due to the effort to expand rapeseed area. Although the planting conditions are not currently ideal, they are better than a year ago and promise a good start for the new crops.

MY 2024/25, Trade

Wheat: The marketing year started with larger beginning stocks [reported](#) by the MinAg at 1.243 MMT, above the beginning stocks in MY 2023/24 (1.03 MMT). Coupled with the good crop, this made farmers more eager sellers early in the season. Export demand was favorable from the beginning of the harvest campaign, and it triggered growing export sales. Wheat prices provided a positive margin to producers due to higher yields although the price level was still below that in MY 2023/24. However, prices have gradually increased and as of October, wheat prices were down six percent compared to the prices a year ago (see details [here](#)).

As of October 11, wheat exports reached 2.16 MMT, of which 1.7 MMT were exported to non-EU countries (Table 3, MinAg's Weekly Monitoring of Commodity Markets bulletins). Despite the strong early start in the season, as of today, wheat exports are still 13 percent behind the wheat exports a year ago (2.491 MMT). Farmers have become more reluctant sellers lately due to poor corn yields. Due to the abundant crop and very good quality, wheat exports in MY 2024/25 are currently estimated by FAS/Sofia at 5.9 MMT, above 5.7 MMT exported in MY 2023/24, as shipments are expected to strengthen compared to last year as the marketing year progresses (Trade Data Monitor/TDM data, Table 4).

Graph 2. Wheat Monthly Prices, MY 2021/22 – MY 2024/25 (October), BGN/MT



Red line- Bulgarian ex-farm prices, milling wheat, in Bulgarian leva (BGN) per MT

Blue line – EU market price, milling wheat, BGN/MT

Green line – Bulgarian FOB export price, milling and feed wheat, BGN/MT

Source: Bulgarian MinAg [Dashboard](#) Grains and Oilseeds, October 10, 2024

Barley: Farmers were eager to sell from the beginning of the marketing year due to the unusually big crop. In addition, barley prices were gradually increasing, although still below those in MY 2023/24. As of October, barley prices were seven percent below the prices a year ago (see details [here](#)).

As of October 11, barley exports reached 578,000 MT of which 334,000 MT were exported to non-EU countries (Table 3, MinAg Weekly Monitoring of Commodity Markets bulletins). This is more than double the barley exports at this time a year ago (271,000 MT). It is believed that the record crop will result in record exports of barley in MY 2024/25, currently estimated by FAS/Sofia at 850,000 MT compared to 519,000 MT exported in MY 2023/24 (Table 4).

Corn: Corn prices have been increasing since June due to the local deficit. However, despite the small crop, as of October the domestic Bulgarian prices were still two percent below the price level a year ago (see [here](#)) because of robust global corn supplies. In addition to very poor yields, the quality of the crop is reportedly problematic with higher levels of aflatoxins. Local feed users and livestock operators report that often 30 or more percent of deliveries are sub-standard and have to be returned to producers. Exporters report similar challenges. The quality issues suppress the demand for corn and push the users to look for alternatives such as feed wheat and barley which are available in abundant quantities and are of very good quality this year.

MY 2023/24: The smaller crop in MY 2023/24 and tight beginning stocks were the main reasons for declining corn exports. The bleak prospects for MY 2024/25 crop forced farmers to practically halt sales

as soon as the yields began to decline in July/August. According to the TDM data, corn exports in the first three quarters of MY 2023/24 were at 860,000 MT while the MinAg reports MY 2023/24 at about 700,000 MT (TDM uses MY from October 1- September 30 while the MinAg uses MY from September 1- August 31) (Table 4).

MY 2024/25: As of October 11, there were no exports from the new corn crop. It is believed that record low crop, along with poor quality, will have a serious negative impact on exports. At the same time, local use for both food and feed is also estimated to decrease and to be substituted with feed quality wheat and barley.

Appendix.

Table 1. Winter Grains Production as of September 5, 2024, MY 2024/25, in MT

	September 7, 2023	September 5, 2024	Change, Percent
Wheat	6,588,680	6,759,353	2.6%
Barley (Winter and Spring)	728,560	1,019,088	39.9%
Corn*	1,779,249	1,237,756	-30.4%
Rye	19,686	14,738	-25.1%
Triticale	79,555	74,619	-6.2%
Source: Bulgarian MinAg Weekly Bulletin #36, September 18, 2024 Note*: Harvest data as of October 10, MinAg Weekly Bulletin #39, October 16, 2024			

Table 2. FAS/Sofia Grain Production Forecast MY 2024/25, October 2024

Crops	Area Harvested, HA	Production, MT
Wheat	1.193 million	7.0 million
Barley (winter and spring)	188,000	1.1 million
Corn	510,000	1.7 million
Total	1,891,000	9,800,000
Source: FAS/Sofia		

Table 3: MY 2024/25 Trade in Major Grain Crops, as of October 11, 2024

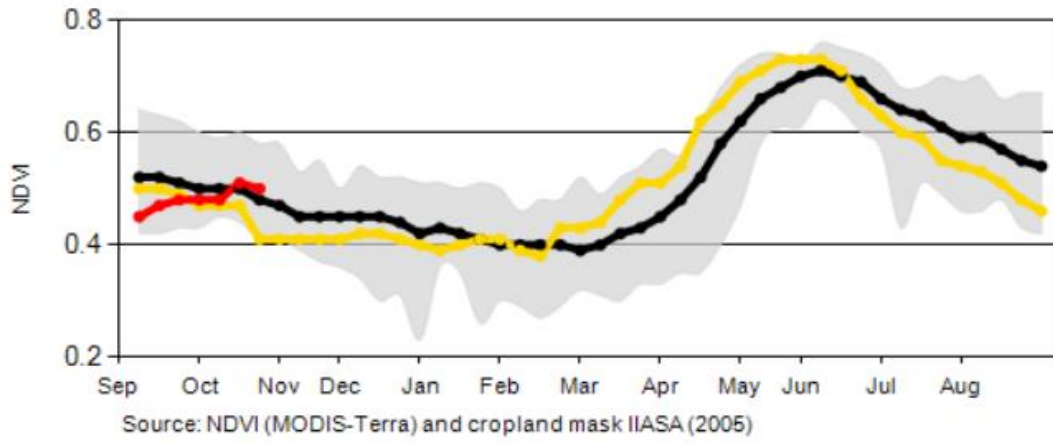
Types of Grains	Imports, MT	Exports, MT
Wheat	0	2,158,367 (including 1,723,865 MT to non-EU markets);
Barley	0	578,077 MT (including 334,665 MT to non-EU markets);
Corn*	494 MT	0
Source: MinAg Weekly Grain Market Bulletins 2024. *Note: The Bulgarian MinAg uses September 1-August 31 as a MY for corn. Trade data refers to 2024 corn crop traded since September 1, 2024		

Table 4: MY 2023/24 Trade in Major Grain Crops, Trade Data Monitor

Types of Grains	Imports, MT	Exports, MT
Wheat	138,228 MT, mainly from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 76,123 MT, Romania - 16,797 MT, Greece - 10,777 MT, Austria - 12,740 MT, Ukraine 	5,681,871 MT, mainly to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1,048,978 MT, Algeria - 951,679 MT, Indonesia - 927,520 MT, Spain - 627,923 MT, Thailand - 437,385 MT, Greece - 435,912 MT, South Korea
Barley	1,007 MT, mainly from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 315 MT, Hungary - 280 MT, Romania - 149 MT, Austria 	519,027 MT, mainly to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 156,785 MT, Morocco - 144,954 MT, Spain - 59,526 MT, Germany - 44,975 MT, Greece
Corn*	29,770 MT, mainly from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 6,150 MT, Romania - 5,518 MT, Turkey - 5,073 MT, Greece - 4,790 MT, Hungary 	858,672 MT, mainly to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 236,847 MT, Romania - 149,452 MT, Greece - 123,639 MT, China - 87,500 MT, Turkey - 56,060 MT, Saudi Arabia - 42,857 MT, Morocco - 41,666 MT, Italy
Source: Trade Data Monitor.		
Note:* The trade data for corn includes the first three quarters of MY 2023/24 until August		

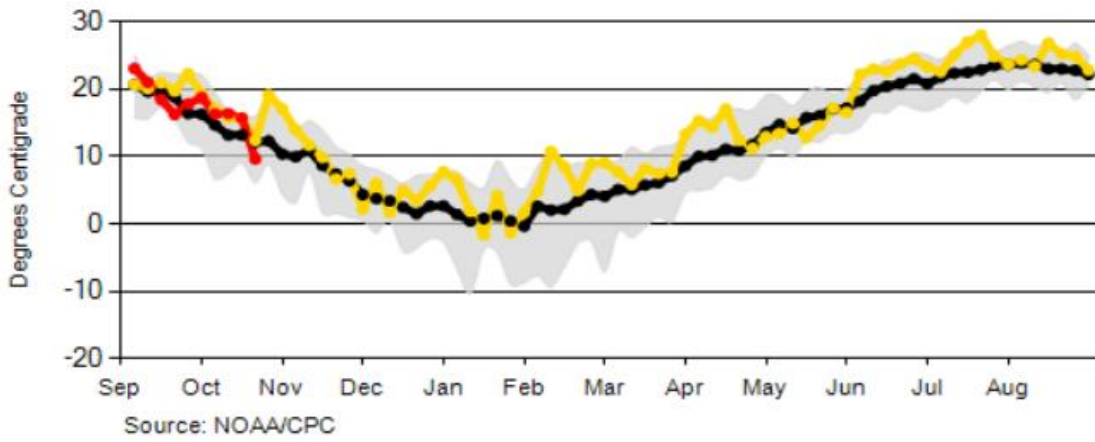
Graph 3. USDA [Crop Explorer](#), Bulgaria, Vegetation Index (NDVI), Average Temperature, Percent of Soil Moisture, Surface and Subsurface Soil Moisture, as of October 2024

NDVI (MODIS) for Bulgaria



2024 / 2025 2023 / 2024 Normal Min/Max

Average Temperature (CPC) for Bulgaria



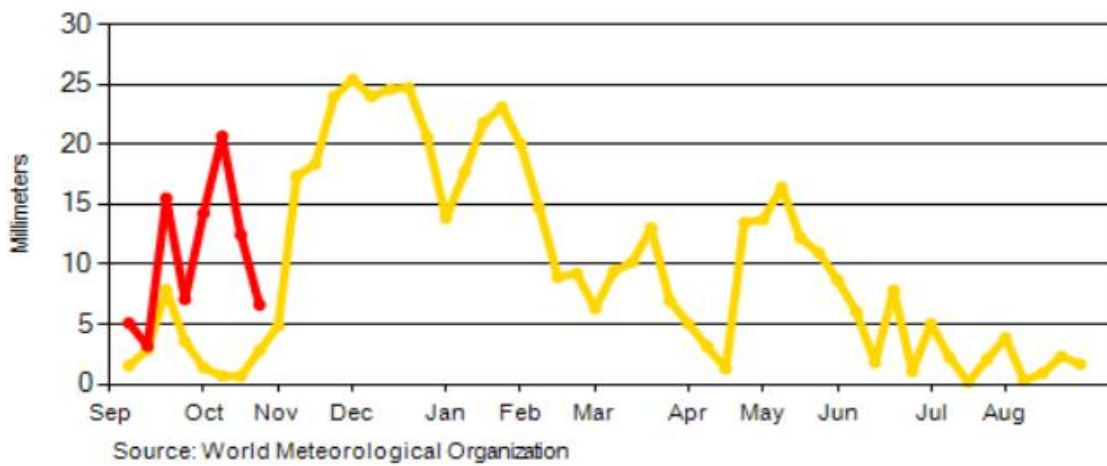
2024 / 2025 2023 / 2024 Normal Min/Max

Percent Soil Moisture (WMO) for Bulgaria

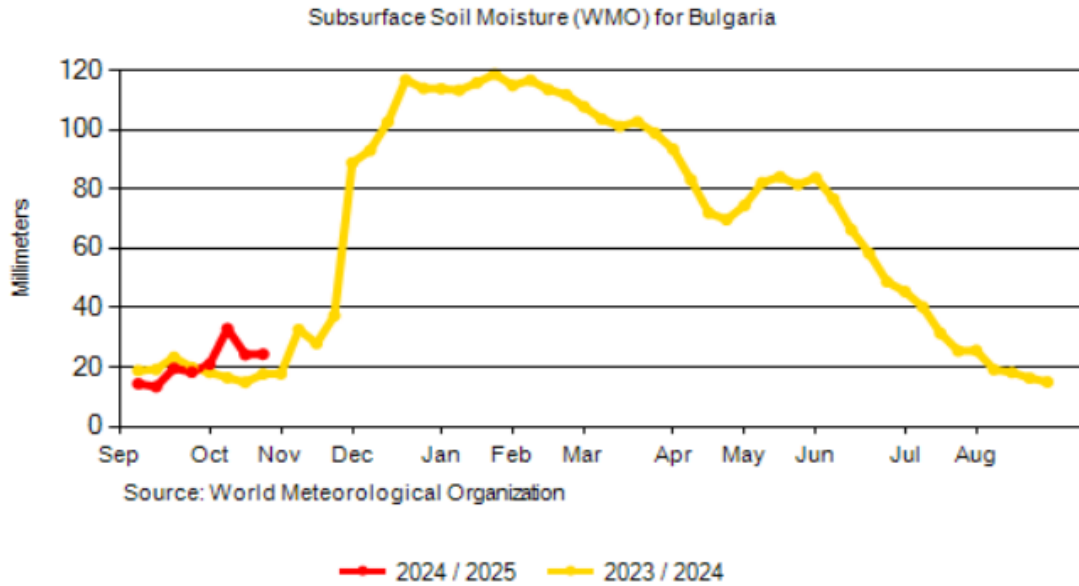


2024 / 2025 2023 / 2024

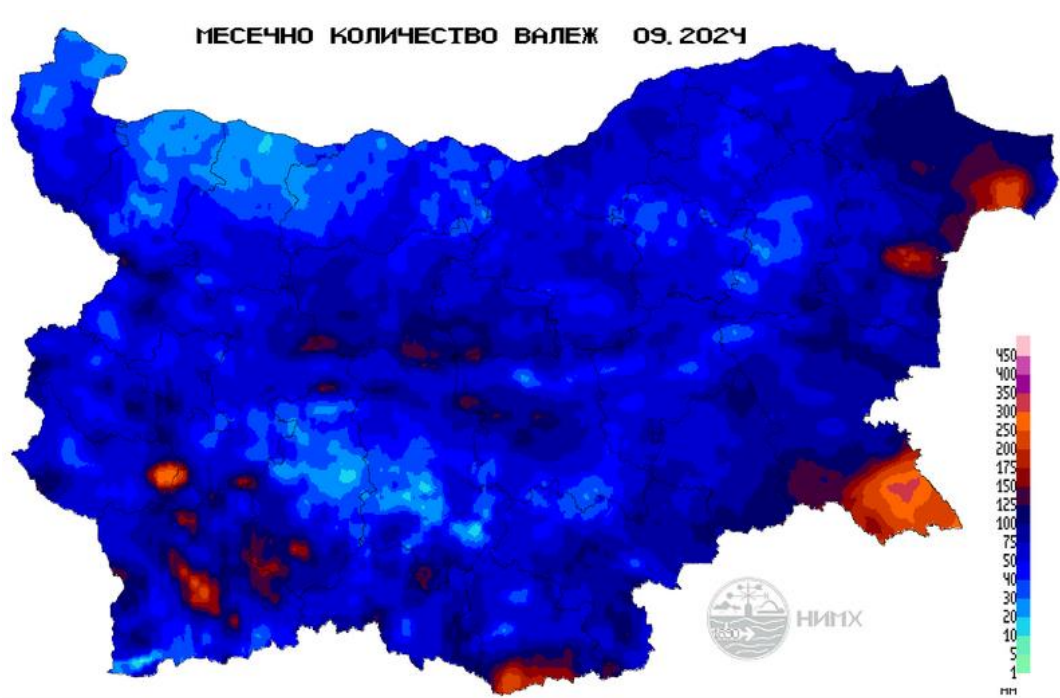
Surface Soil Moisture (WMO) for Bulgaria



2024 / 2025 2023 / 2024

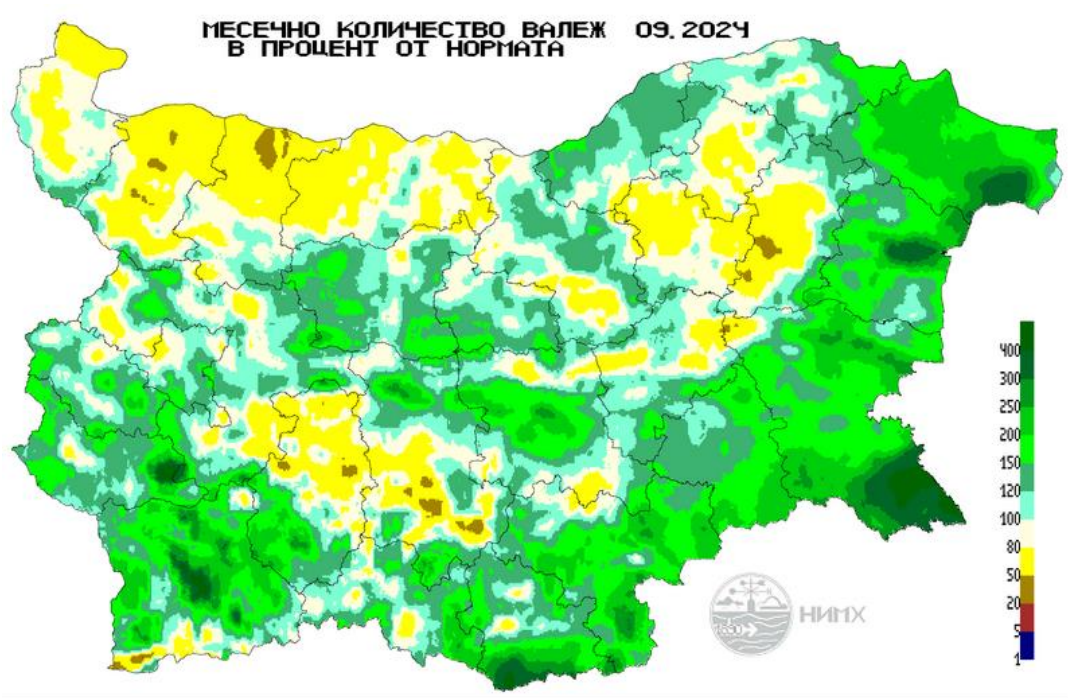


Map 1. September Rainfall 2024



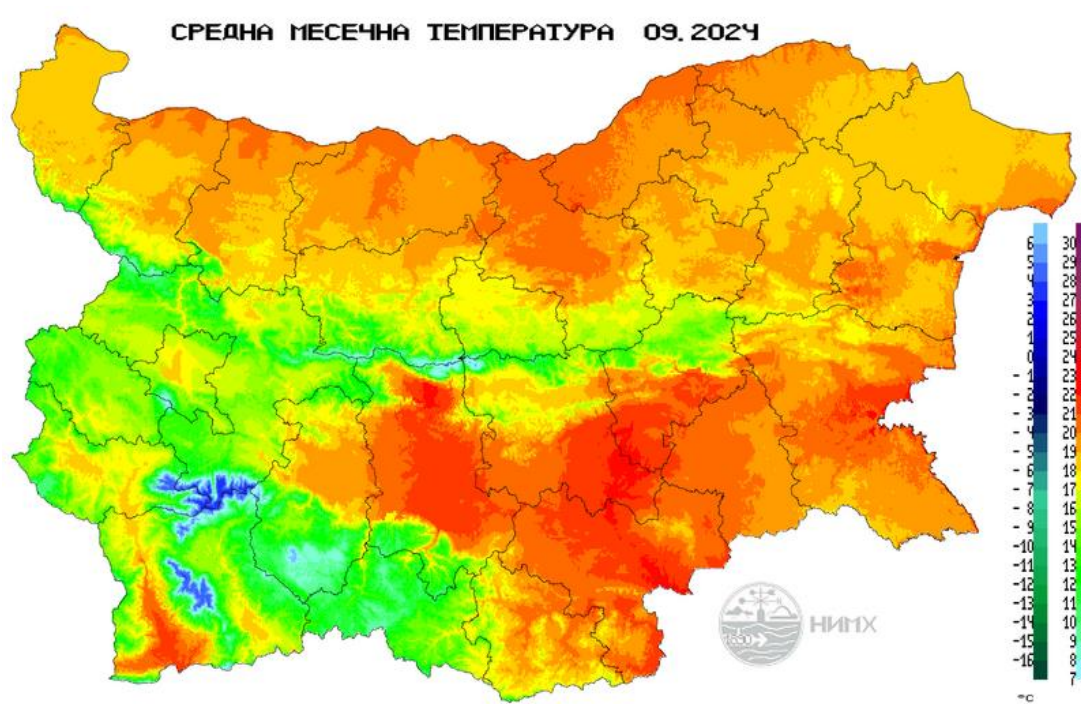
Source: [Bulgarian National Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology](http://www.bnmh.gov.bg)

Map 2. September Rainfall 2024 as a percent of Monthly Norm



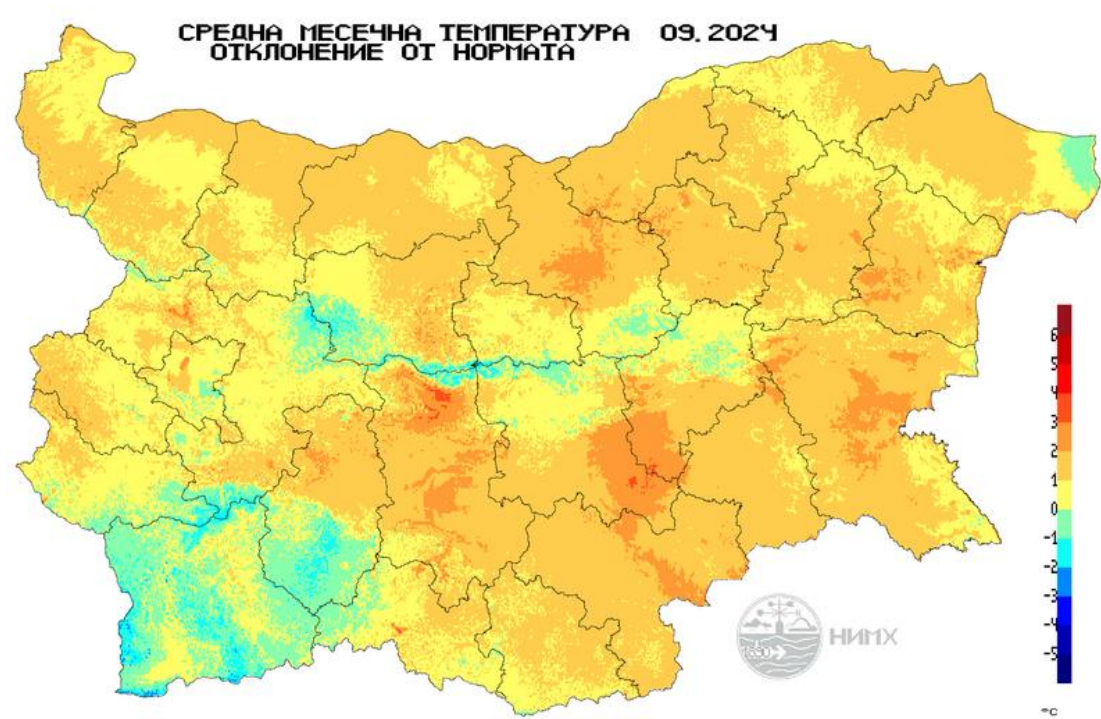
Source: [Bulgarian National Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology](https://www.bgh.bg/)

Map 3. Average Temperature September 2024



Source: [Bulgarian National Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology](https://www.bgh.bg/)

Map 4: September 2024: Deviation from the Average Temperature Norm



Source: [Bulgarian National Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology](#)

Attachments:

No Attachments.