

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

Date: December 13, 2024

Report Number: BU2024-0021

Report Name: Bulgarian Oilseed Crops Shrink to Decade-Low Level

Country: Bulgaria

Post: Sofia

Report Category: Oilseeds and Products

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Report Highlights:

In marketing year (MY) 2024/25 Bulgaria harvested its lowest oilseed crop for more than a decade due to extremely hot and dry summer weather conditions impacting yields. The total oilseed crop for sunflower, rapeseed and soybeans is estimated at just over 1.6 million metric tons (MMT), compared to 2.0 MMT the previous year. FAS/Sofia has made further reductions in its estimates based on the final harvest data. The current FAS/Sofia estimate for the rapeseed crop is at 175,000 MT, down by 15 percent from last year. In MY 2023/24, Bulgaria was a net importer of rapeseed with growing trade driven by expanding domestic crush capacities and this trend is projected to strengthen in MY 2024/25 with forecast imports of above 200,000 MT. The sunflower crop is estimated to fall to 1.5 MMT in MY 2024/25, also down by 15 percent from last year, despite higher planted area. These developments have resulted in a deficit of oilseeds, prices creeping upward, a decline in oilseed exports, higher imports, and sluggish crush.

Weather Overview

Following extremely hot and dry summer weather conditions (GAIN report [BU2024-0014](#)) that reduced the rapeseed and sunflower yields considerably, long-awaited rains arrived in late August/early September. This improved soil moisture reserves and helped for the timely start of rapeseed planting for the MY 2025/26 crop, with some delays in the driest regions. Daily temperatures fluctuated between 1 °C and 2 °C above the long-term-average in September while the precipitation remained 30–80 percent below the long-term average until 29 September, when abundant rainfall arrived, particularly in the northern and eastern regions. The abundant rains in late September slowed down rapeseed sowing, mirroring the previous winter crop campaign. The rapeseed sowing campaign was completed by mid - October and thanks to the precipitation and favorable temperatures, the crop has emerged and was generally in good condition. Still, crop conditions were poor in the north-western and southern regions, which suffered from drought in October and early November. More rain was needed to sustain adequate emergence and early growth of rapeseeds. In these regions the crop was still small due to a persistent rainfall deficit. On the other hand, predominantly average to above average temperatures and drier-than-usual conditions helped farmers to harvest sunflower.

First snow and more rainfall came at the end of November and early December which supported better soil moisture reserves although the northwest remained drier (Maps 4-7). As of early December, the surface soil moisture is adequate, however, the sub-surface soil moisture reserves are far from ideal (Maps 2 and 3). The vegetation index was above the norm in October but fell below the average in November and in early December (Graph 7). ([JRC MARS Bulletin October 2024 Vol 32 №10](#), [JRC MARS Bulletin November 2024 Vol 32 № 11](#) and Maps 1-7 [Crop Explorer](#) and [Bulgaria data](#)).

MY 2025/26

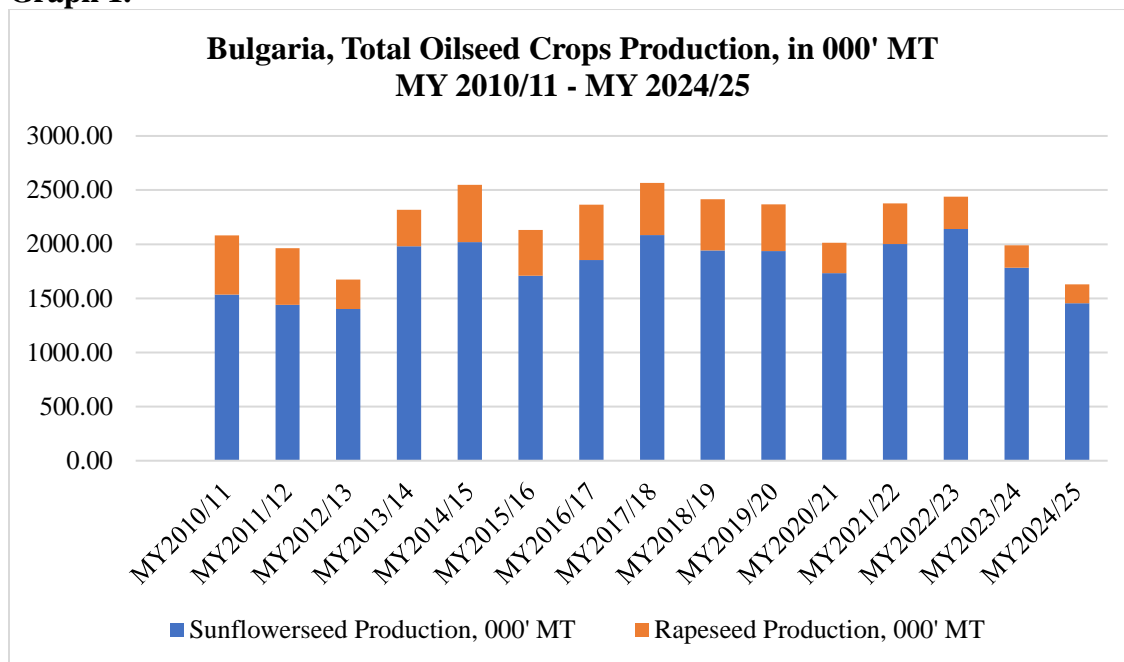
The rainy weather in early September supported a timely start of rapeseed planting for MY 2025/26. This year farmers reversed the trend of shrinking rapeseed area that began in MY 2022/23 (Graph 2), and as of November 28, the Ministry of Agriculture (MinAg) reported 100,000 HA planted under rapeseed, about three percent more than a year ago (MinAg [Bulletin #46](#), December 4, 2024). Important motivations were the sharply higher prices and active domestic demand for crush. The marketing year (July) began with 12 percent higher prices than a year ago and although prices softened later, as of September rapeseed prices were still nine percent above the levels in the previous season (Graph 4). Provided that the weather cooperates, MY 2025/26 rapeseed production may have a chance to recover and grow compared to the current season.

MY 2024/25 Estimates

Total production of oilseed crops (rapeseed, sunflower, and soybeans) decreased to a very low level in MY 2024/25 of slightly above 1.6 MMT compared to about 2.0 MMT last year (Graph 1, Tables 1 and 2). With expanded crush capacities in recent years estimated at about 5.0 MMT for both sunflower and rapeseed, this situation has become a significant challenge for the local crushing industry. The country will need to import larger volumes of oilseeds at a time when the EU and the traditional regional suppliers (Black Sea/Ukraine and Moldova) are also in a deficit market and imports are more expensive and challenging. The ability of the Bulgarian crushing industry to continue to produce and export competitively processed products (meals and oils) will be under strain due to growing prices of the raw materials and depressed prices of the processed products, leading to very small, or even negative, margins. Crush capacities will likely remain underutilized for a third consecutive year. The tension

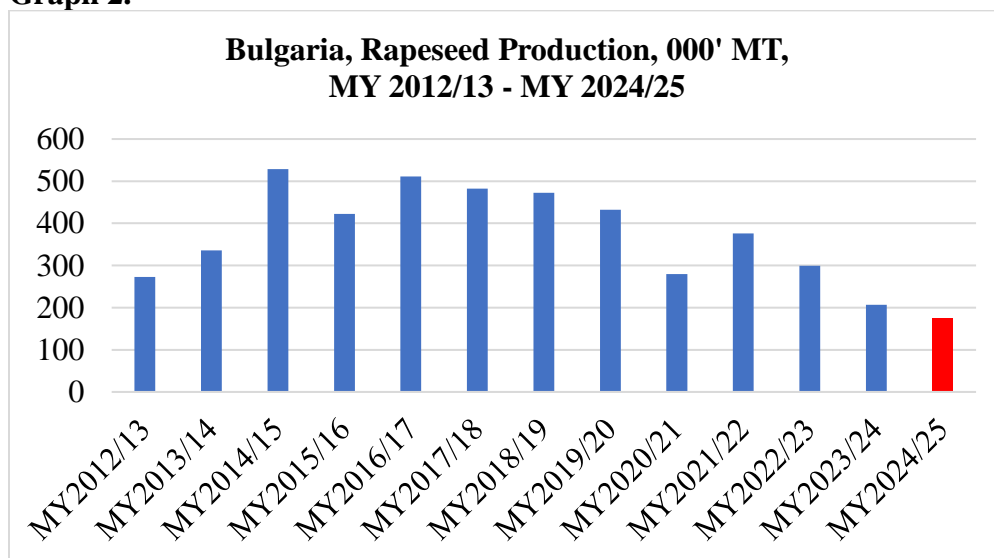
between farmers and crushers has escalated. While the crushing industry needs liberal trade and import regimes due to the deficit, farmers keep pressuring the authorities to continue to limit imports.

Graph 1.



Rapeseed: The final harvest data (MinAg and Eurostat) confirms a decline in harvested area to 70,000 HA and production to 175,000 MT (Tables 1 and 2). The harvested area was 12 percent lower than in MY 2023/24 while the average yields decreased to 2.5 MT/HA compared to 2.6 MT/HA in MY 2023/24. As a result, production was reduced by 15 percent compared with MY 2023/24 (Graph 2, Tables 1 and 2).

Graph 2.

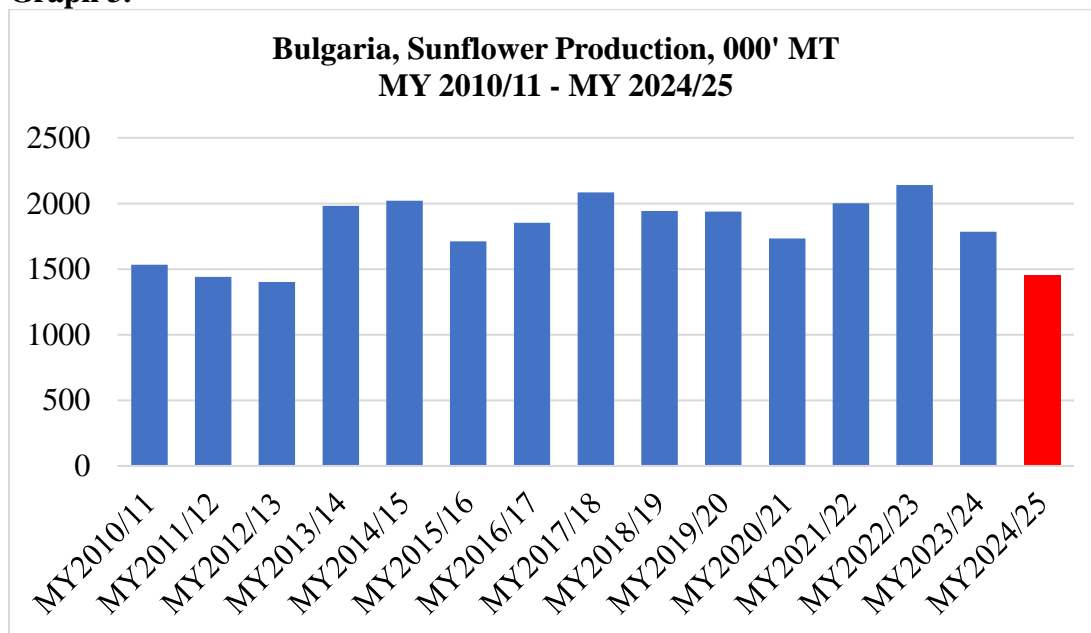


Source: Eurostat, MY 2024/25 is FAS/Sofia current estimate

Sunflower: The final harvest data (MinAg and Eurostat) confirms a higher sunflower harvested area of 920,000 HA or 5.7 percent more than a year ago (Tables 1 and 2). However, due to the sharp reduction in average yields to 1.6 MT/HA compared to 2.05 MT/HA in MY 2023/24, production declined to 1.5 MMT, 15 percent lower than a year ago and the lowest since 2012 (Graph 3, Tables 1 and 2).

In early December, the MinAg published its official [quality tests](#) for the 2024 sunflower crop. The results show that 69.6 percent of the crop meets the standard of 42 percent oil content, foreign matter of not more than 4 percent, and moisture content of not exceeding 11 percent. This is comparable to the results of the 2023 crop (70.8 percent compliant with the standard), but it is lower than in 2022 (80 percent). In terms of the oil content alone, 77 percent of the crop had 42 percent or higher oil content compared with 87 percent in 2023 and 93 percent in 2022. The average oil content was 43.9 percent or lower than in 2023, and the lowest since 2022. In addition, the oil content varied in a much wider range from 27.7 percent to 51.0 percent. According to industry sources, lower oil content and wider variations this year become a challenge for the crushers who face not only a deficit market but also a lower quality product negatively impacting crush margins.

Graph 3.



Source: Eurostat, MY 2024/25 is FAS/Sofia current estimate

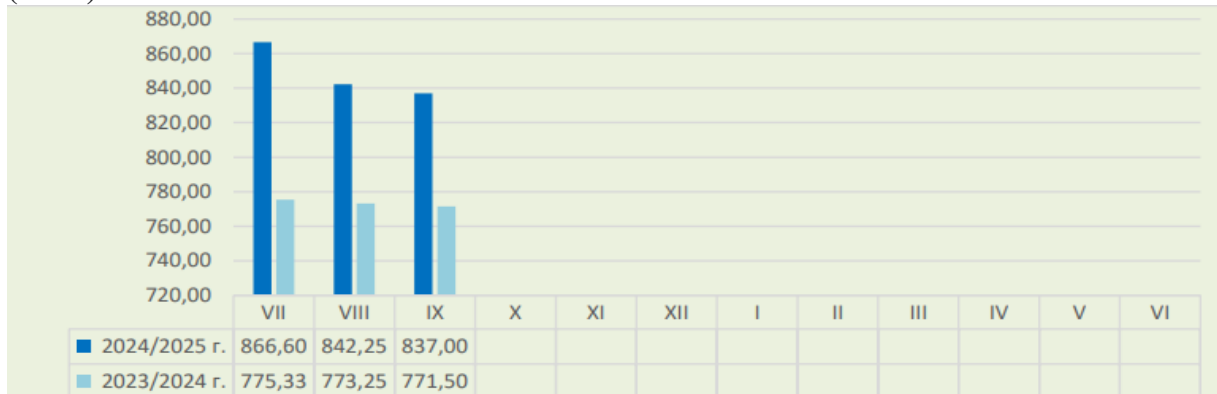
MY 2024/25 Production Estimates, Trade and Use

Final production data is updated based on Eurostat/December and is provided in Table 1.

Rapeseed and Processed Products:

Rapeseed prices have been sharply higher so far in MY 2024/25 (Graph 4) compared to the previous season due to the smaller crop, and a regional and EU deficit of rapeseeds. Crushers and traders have made efforts to maintain or build stocks in anticipation of even higher prices for both rapeseeds and rapeseed oil/meal.

Graph 4. Rapeseed Monthly Market Prices, MY 2024/25 vs MY 2023/24 in Bulgarian Leva (BGN)/MT



*The chart shows prices for the MY, which begins in July, with MY 2024/25 in dark blue and MY 2023/24 in light blue.

Source: Bulgarian Ministry of Agriculture Monitoring of Commodity Markets Weekly Bulletins

In recent years, domestic crush has improved significantly due to expansion of the crushing facilities for biodiesel which is estimated to motivate higher imports in the current year. Per the MinAg data, MY 2024/25 imports of rapeseed as of the end of November are at 125,000 MT, 18 percent more than the 106,000 MT imported in the corresponding period a year ago. MY 2024/25 exports as of end of November are at 61,000 MT, all destined for the EU market, compared to 70,000 MT exported a year ago (Table 3).

Although current rapeseed oil and meal prices are still not providing sufficient margins for the crushers, industry sources report that more than 200,000 MT are expected to be imported in the near future from non-EU origins. For many typical sunflower crushers, switching to rapeseed crush is a better solution in absence of local raw materials and more challenging imports of sunflower seeds. As a result, local rapeseed crush may be higher than previously expected. According to the MinAg weekly data, rapeseed crush as of the end of November 2024 is at 132,000 MT, 25 percent more than a year ago (106,000 MT at the end of November 2023). As a result, exports of processed products (rapeseed oil and meal) are also expected to grow. Nevertheless, rapeseed imports and crush might be limited by the weak crush margins and slower increases in the prices of rapeseed oil and meal relative to seeds.

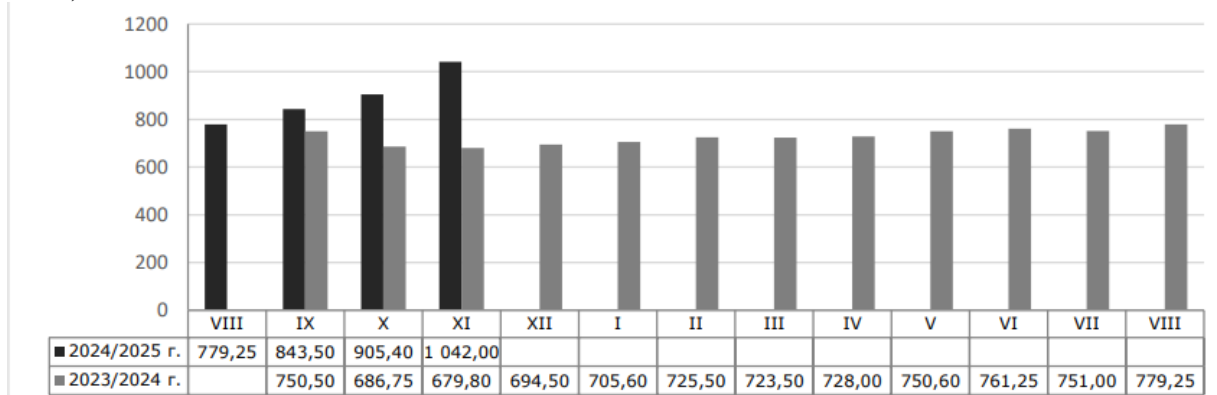
MY 2023/24: A similar crush pattern existed in the previous season when improved rapeseed crush reached 227,000 MT, 210 percent higher than in MY 2022/23 (108,000 MT) as some sunflower crushers switched to rapeseed due to the deficit of sunflower seeds on the market (GAIN report [BU2024-0014](#)). Please, see completed trade data for MY 2023/24 in Table 4.

Sunflower and Processed Products:

Since August, farm-gate sunflower seed prices have increased, exceeding the levels seen in the previous year (Graph 5). In October, sunflower prices were sharply higher at 53 percent more than a year ago reflecting the local decline in the crop and the deficit market. However, the price growth might be limited and slow in the near future due to poor crush margins. Reportedly, recent demand for de-hulling is currently more active than that for crush since the processors can afford to increase the prices of the

finished product destined for the food industries and/or exports. This in turn supports higher sunflower seed prices.

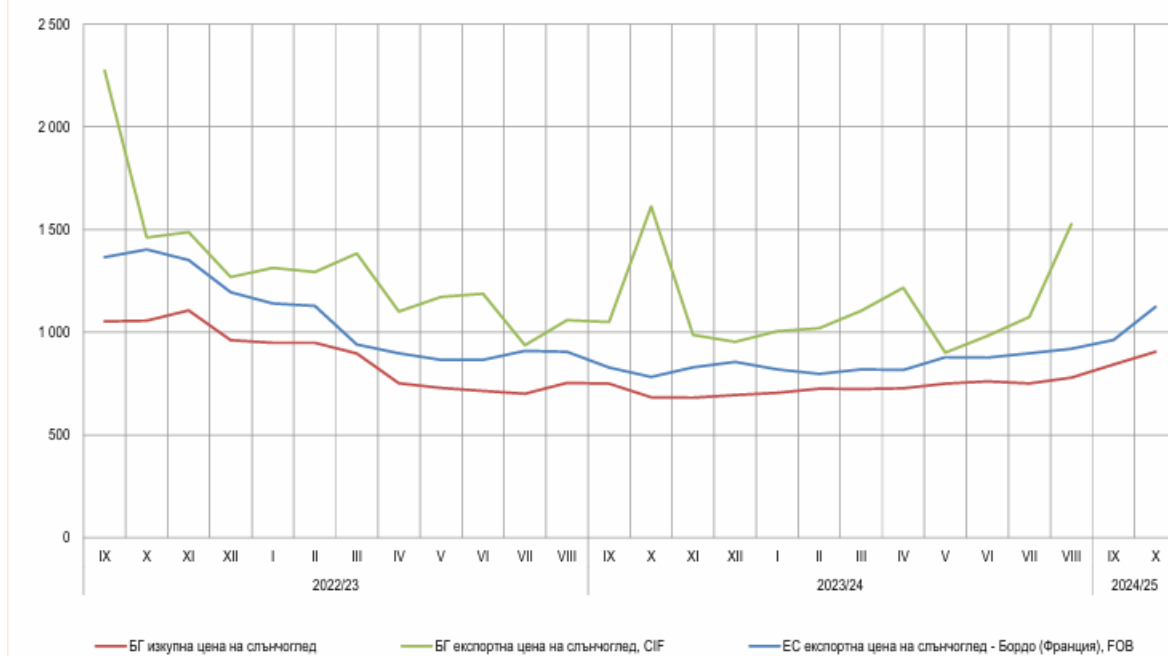
Graph 5. Sunflower Monthly Market Prices, MY 2023/24 vs MY 2022/23 in BGN/MT (November 2024)



*The chart shows prices for the MY, which begins in September, with MY 2023/24 in dark black and MY 2022/23 in grey. The graph also includes August due to early harvest in 2024 when most of the sunflower crop was harvested and began to be traded.

Source: Bulgarian Ministry of Agriculture Monitoring of Commodity Markets Weekly Bulletins

Graph 6. Sunflower Average Monthly Prices, MY 2022/23 – MY 2024/25, BGN/MT



Red line- Bulgarian ex-farm prices, sunflower seeds, in Bulgarian leva (BGN) per MT

Blue line – EU export price FOB Bordeaux, sunflower seeds, BGN/MT

Green line – Bulgarian CIF export price, sunflower seeds, BGN/MT

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

In MY 2024/25, crushers are expected to be significantly impacted and forced to import more sunflower seeds due to the decline in domestic production, lower beginning stocks, and expanded crush capacities. As of end of November, imports were already at 146,000 MT (Table 3), 45 percent more than a year ago (101,000 MT at the end of November 2023). Demand for imports is strong despite weaker crush margins. According to the MinAg, as of the end of November, crush was at 450,000 MT, 11 percent more than a year ago (408,000 MT at the end of November 2023). Dehulling of sunflower seeds were at a stable level of about 130,000 MT as of November in both MY 2024/25 and in MY 2023/24.

Traders and crushers will likely keep stocks on hand and limit exports of sunflower seeds while anticipating price growth for processed products. Exports of sunflower seeds (at end of November) were at only 17,000 MT (Table 3) compared to 64,000 MT a year ago (Graph 6). Nevertheless, the above developments may contribute to tighter supply and demand balance for sunflower seeds and limited exports of sunflower meal and oil for the marketing year.

MY 2023/24: Please, see final trade data in Table 4 and GAIN report [BU2024-0014](#).

Table 1. Oilseed Crops Final Production Data MY 2024/25 and MY 2023/24, December 2024

Crops	Area Harvested (000 HA)		Production (000 MT)	
	MY 2024/25	MY 2023/24	MY 2024/25	MY 2023/24
Rapeseed	69.00	79.79	173.89	207.04
Sunflower	920.00	869.91	1453.80	1783.99
Soybeans	1.00	3.67	1.03	6.07
Total	990.00	953.37	1628.72	1997.1

Source: Eurostat data based on EU standard moisture content- updated as of December 2024

Table 2. FAS/Sofia Oilseeds Production Estimates MY 2024/25, December 2024

Crops	Area Harvested, HA	Production, MT
Rapeseed	70,000	175,000
Sunflower	922,000	1.5 million
Soybeans	1,000	1,000
Total	993,000	1,676,000

Source: FAS/Sofia

Table 3: Trade in Major Oilseed Crops, as of November 27, 2024

Types of Oilseeds	Imports, MT	Exports, MT
Rapeseed, MY 2024/25	124,593 MT	61,341 MT (all is for the EU market)
Sunflower, MY 2024/25	145,870 MT	16,982 MT (all to the EU)

Source: MinAg weekly bulletins;
Note: The Bulgarian MinAg uses September 1-August 31 as a MY for sunflower.

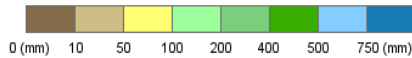
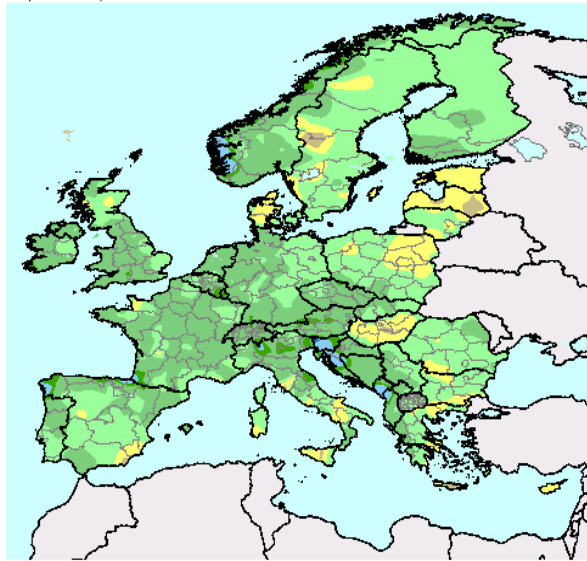
Table 4: MY 2023/24 Trade in Major Oilseeds and Processed Products

Types of Oilseeds	Imports, MT	Exports, MT
Rapeseeds	134,908 MT <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 53,799 MT from Ukraine- 59,259 MT from Moldova- 18,419 MT from Romania	116,659 MT <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 56,357 MT to the Netherlands- 31,011 MT to Germany- 28,636 MT to the United Kingdom
Rapeseed Meal	9,368 MT: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 7,738 MT from Romania- 1,127 MT from Germany	149,824 MT: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 63,638 MT to Spain- 61,191 MT to Israel- 19,205 MT to Morocco- 2,737 MT to Turkey
Rapeseed Oil	7,679 MT: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 4,065 MT from Ukraine- 2,984 MT from Romania	48,611 MT: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 15,928 MT to Spain- 13,303 MT to Belgium- 8,015 MT to Italy- 6,026 MT to the Netherlands
Sunflower Seeds (October 2023 – August 2024)	593,723 MT <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 324,913 MT from Romania- 99,064 MT from Moldova- 75,578 MT from Ukraine- 7,665 MT from Hungary	587,246 MT <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 159,202 MT to the Netherlands- 60,662 MT to Germany- 42,129 MT to China- 38,832 MT to the United Kingdom- 41,114 MT to the United States
Sunflower Meal (October 2023 – August 2024)	56,391 MT: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 35,822 MT from Ukraine- 19,106 MT from Moldova	621,145 MT: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 320,155 MT to China- 45,402 MT to Greece- 17,241 MT to Romania- 19,392 MT to the Netherlands- 18,571 MT to Turkey- 12,008 MT to Germany- 6,050 MT to Israel- 6,211 MT to Spain
Sunflower Oil (October 2023 – August 2024)	327,661 MT: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 154,428 MT from Ukraine- 27,231 MT from Romania	645,861 MT: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 97,241 MT to Greece- 87,178 MT to South Africa- 41,790 MT to Egypt- 34,839 MT to Morocco- 40,459 MT to Spain

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 30,601 MT to Italy - 23,636 MT to China - 19,600 MT to India
Soybeans (October 2023 – August 2024)	270 MT	31 MT
Soybean Meal (October 2023 – August 2024)	109,603 MT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 66,128 MT from Romania - 18,407 MT from Greece 	299 MT
Soybean Oil (October 2023 – August 2024)	20,946 MT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 11,706 MT from Serbia - 3,009 MT from Ukraine 	84 MT
Source: Trade Data Monitor (TDM)		

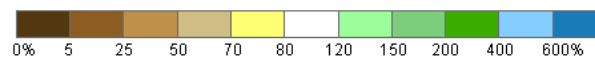
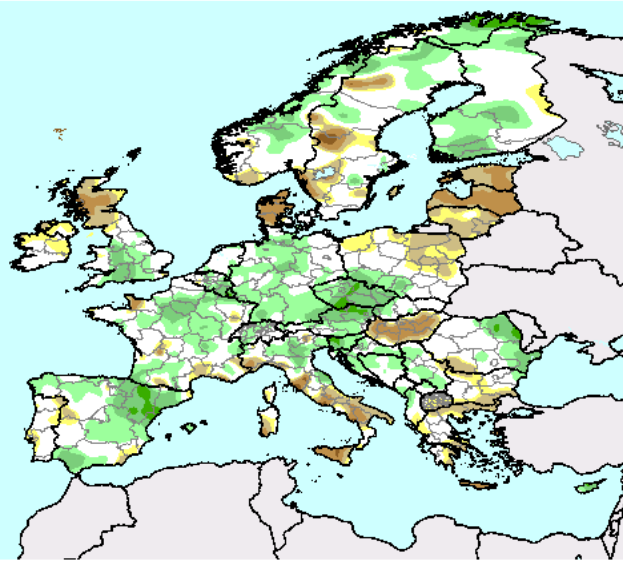
Map 1: USDA [Crop Explorer](#), Europe (including Bulgaria), Precipitation and Percent of Normal Precipitation, September 1 – November 30, 2024.

Precipitation 3-Month (CPC)
Sep. 1 - Nov. 30, 2024



Source: NOAA/CPC

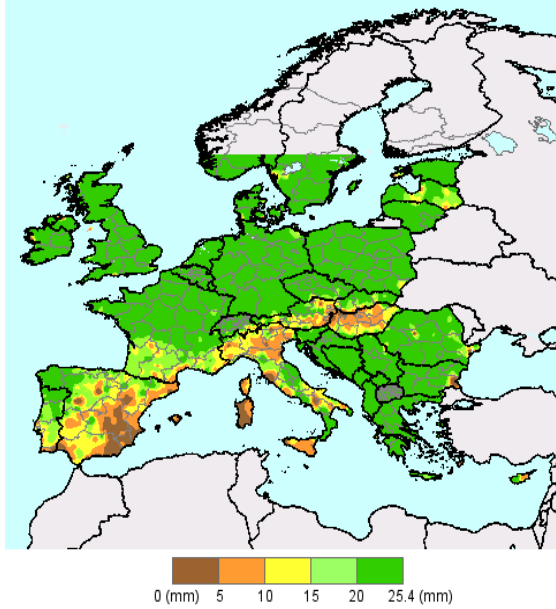
Percent of Normal Precipitation 3-Month (CPC)
Sep. 1 - Nov. 30, 2024



Source: NOAA/CPC

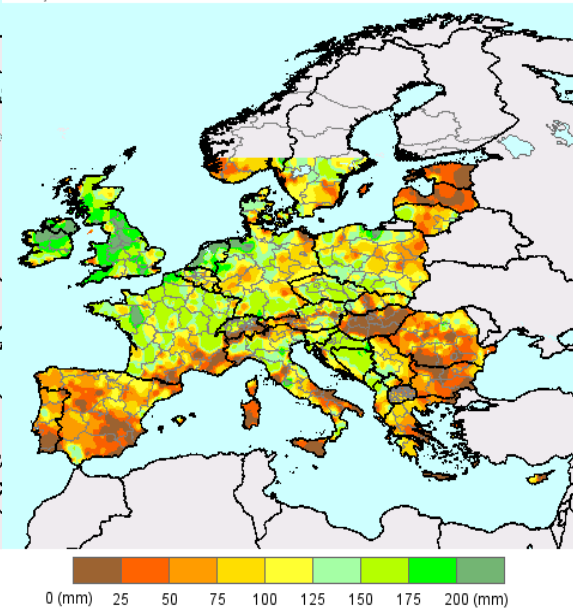
Map 2: USDA Crop Explorer, Europe (including Bulgaria), Surface and Subsurface Soil Moisture as of December 1, 2024

Surface Soil Moisture (WMO)
Dec. 1, 2024



Source: World Meteorological Organization

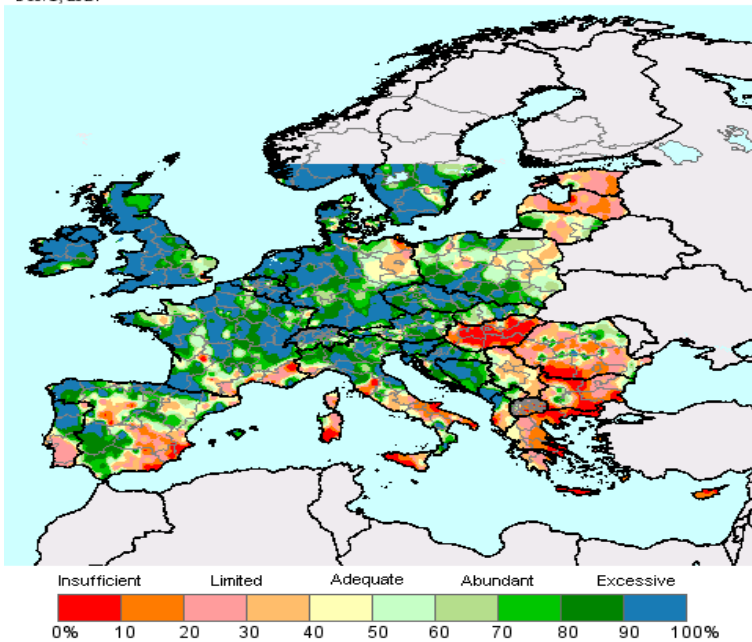
Subsurface Soil Moisture (WMO)
Dec. 1, 2024



Source: World Meteorological Organization

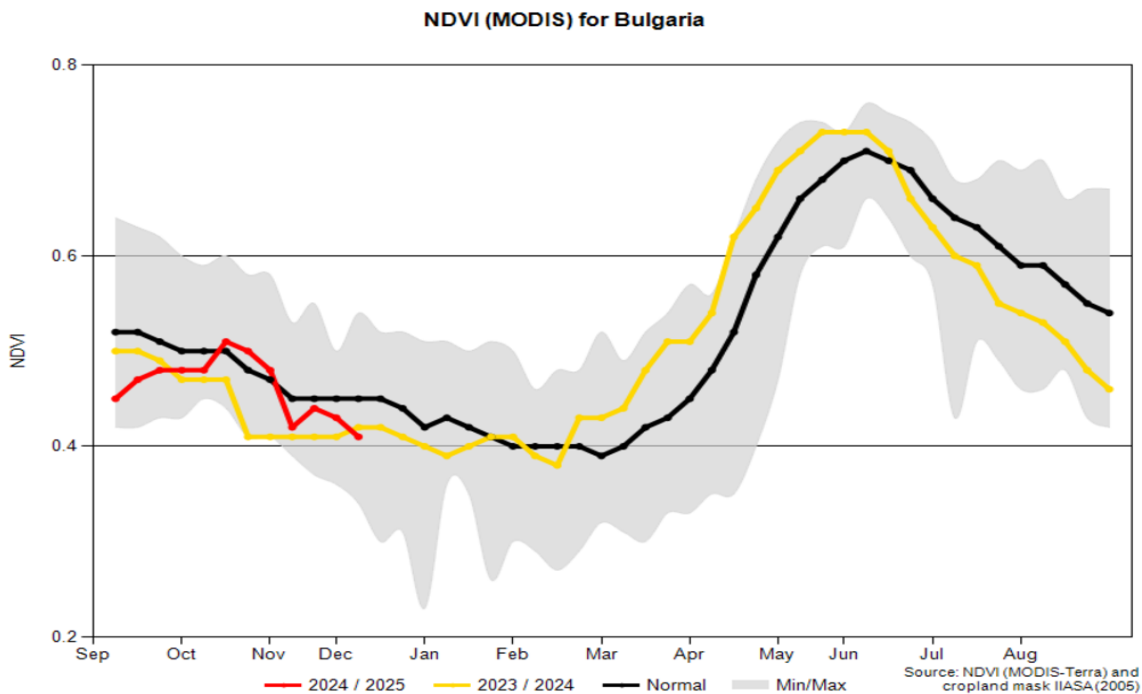
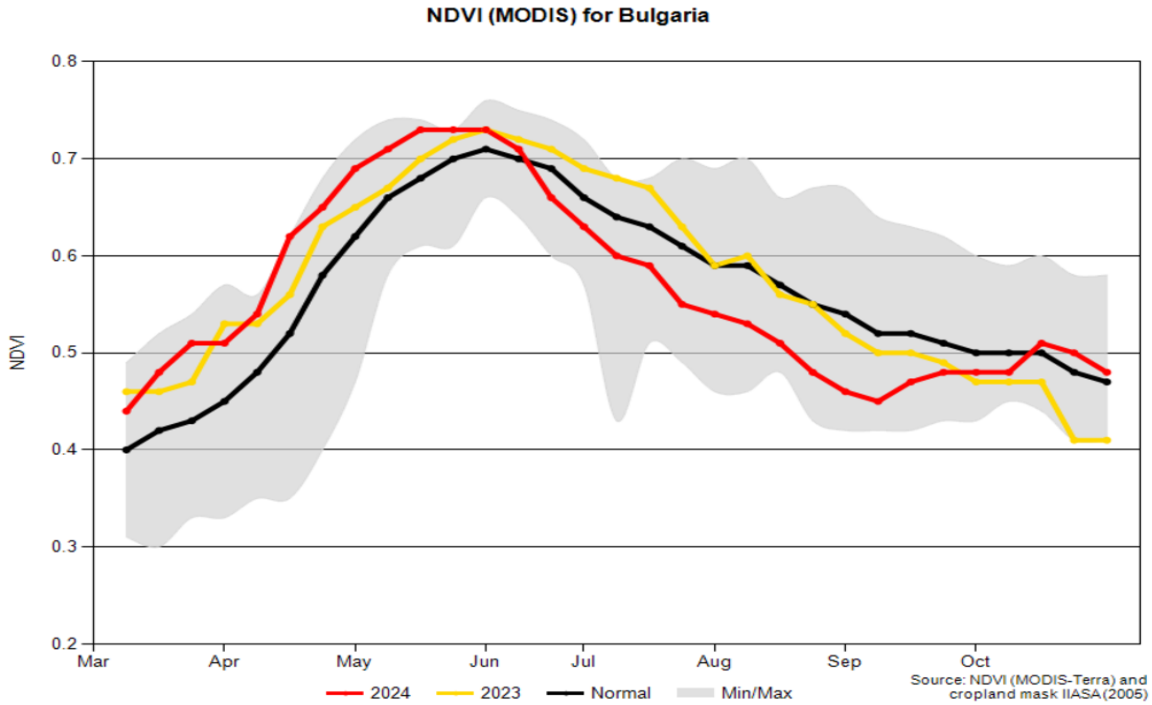
Map 3: USDA Crop Explorer, Europe (including Bulgaria), Percent Soil Moisture, December 1, 2024

Percent Soil Moisture (WMO)
Dec. 1, 2024

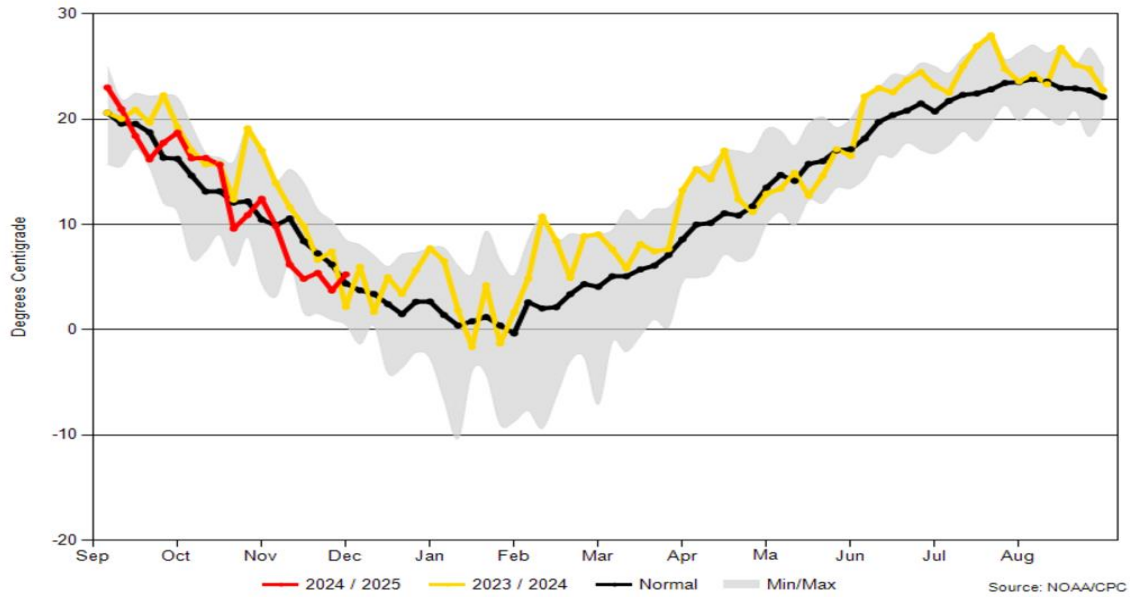


Source: World Meteorological Organization

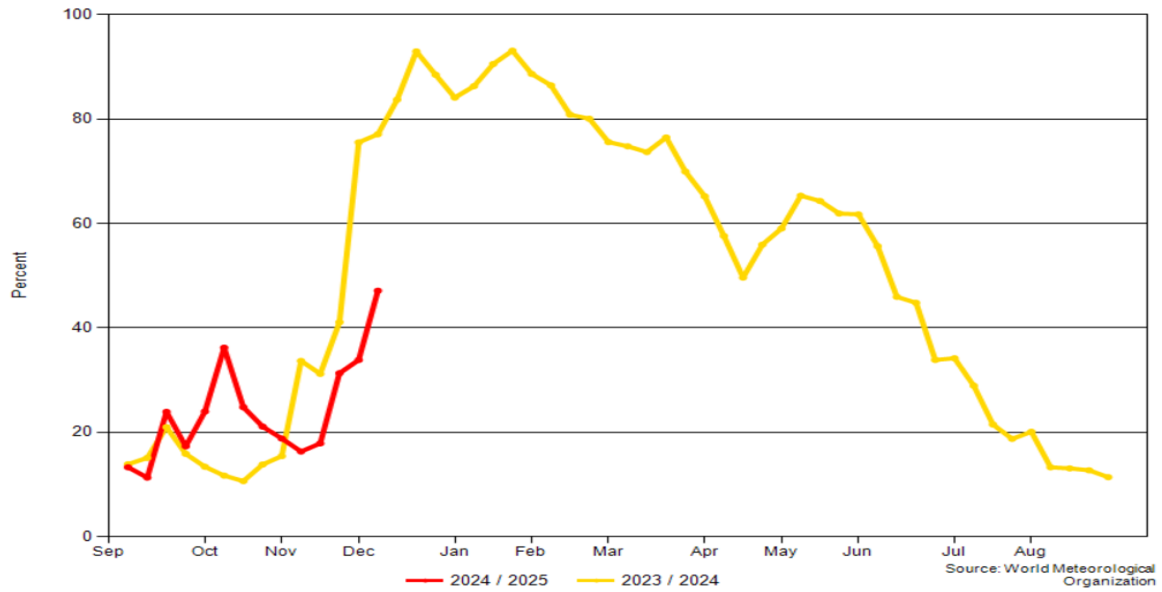
Graph 7. USDA [Crop Explorer](#), Bulgaria, Vegetation Index (NDVI), Average Temperature, Percent of Soil Moisture, Surface and Subsurface Soil Moisture, as of December, 2024



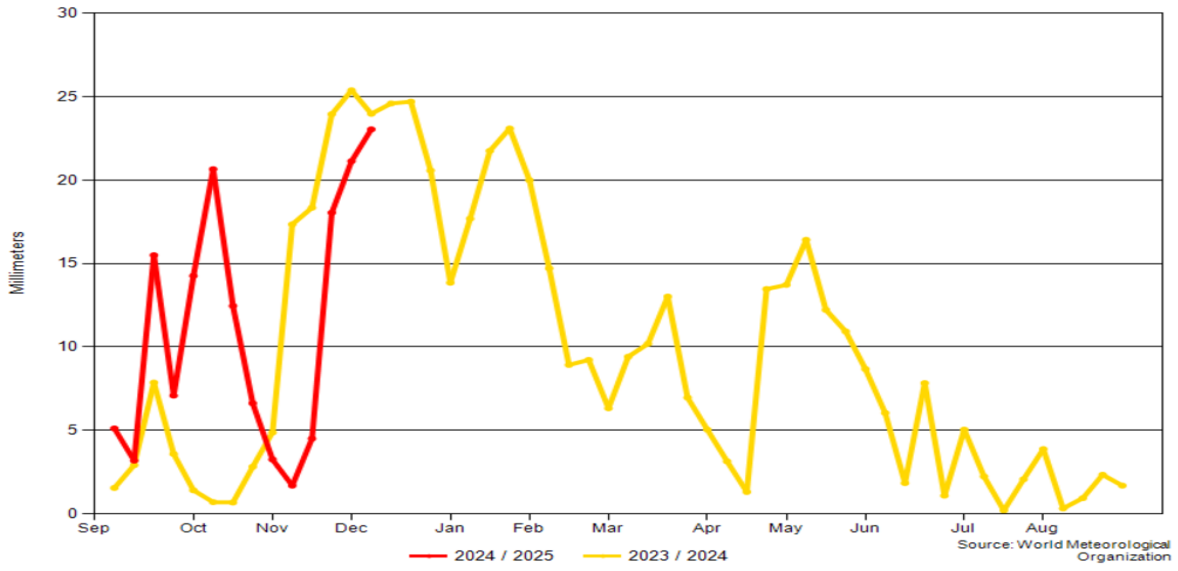
Average Temperature (CPC) for Bulgaria



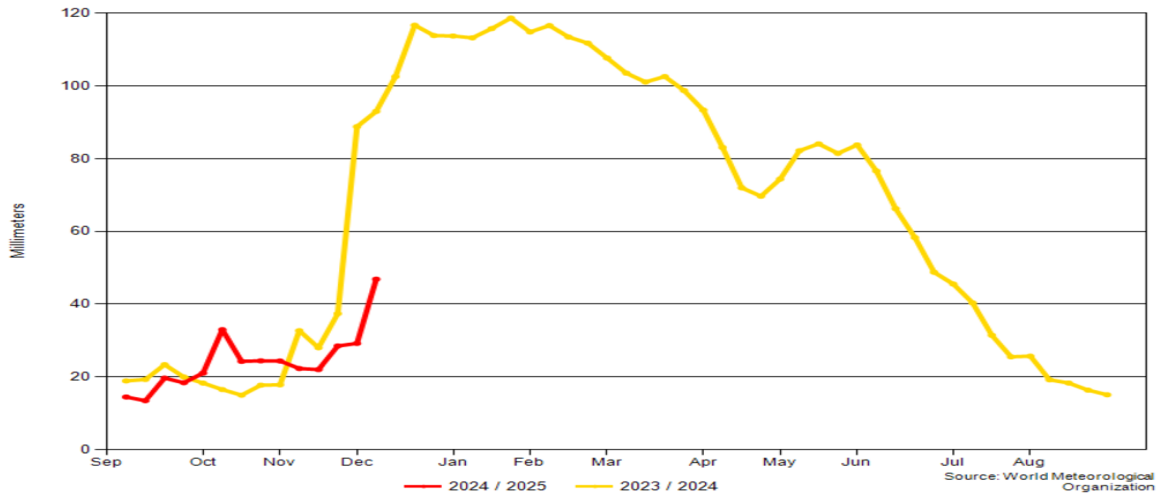
Percent Soil Moisture (WMO) for Bulgaria



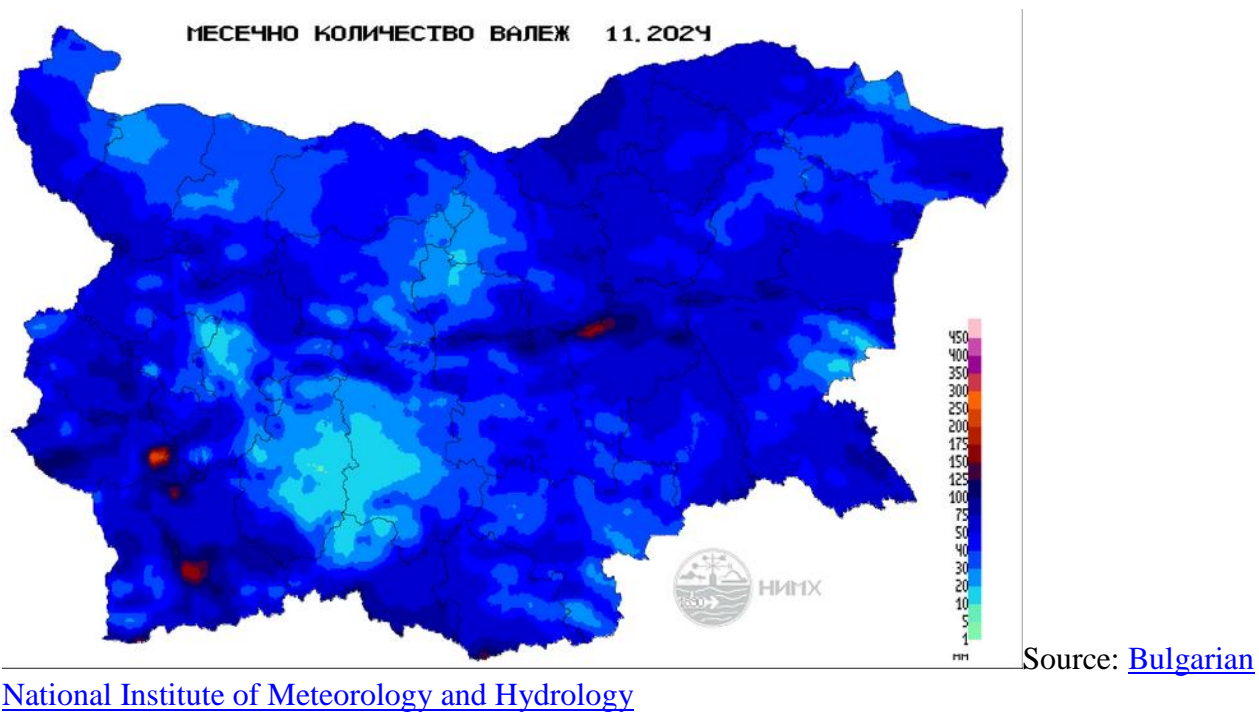
Surface Soil Moisture (WMO) for Bulgaria



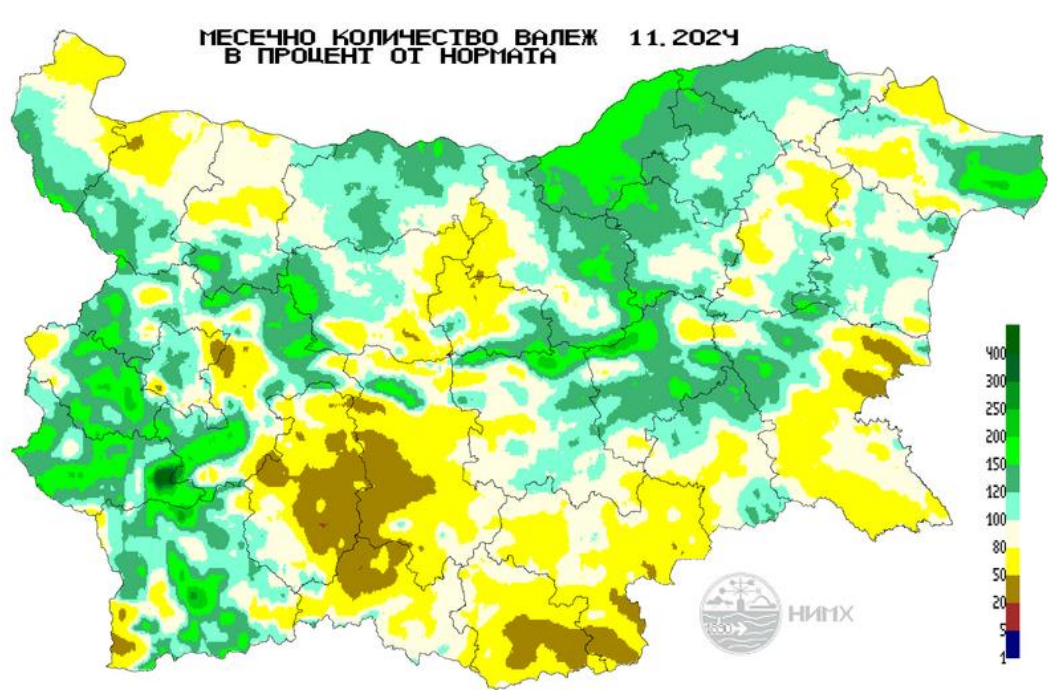
Subsurface Soil Moisture (WMO) for Bulgaria



Map 4. November Rainfall 2024

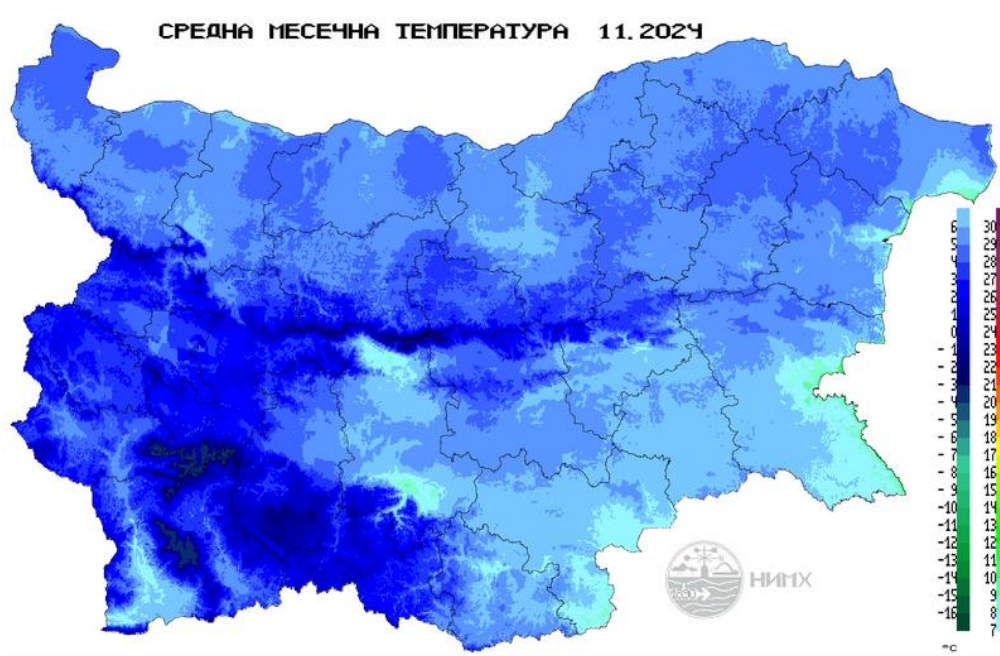


Map 5. November Rainfall 2024 as a percent of Monthly Norm



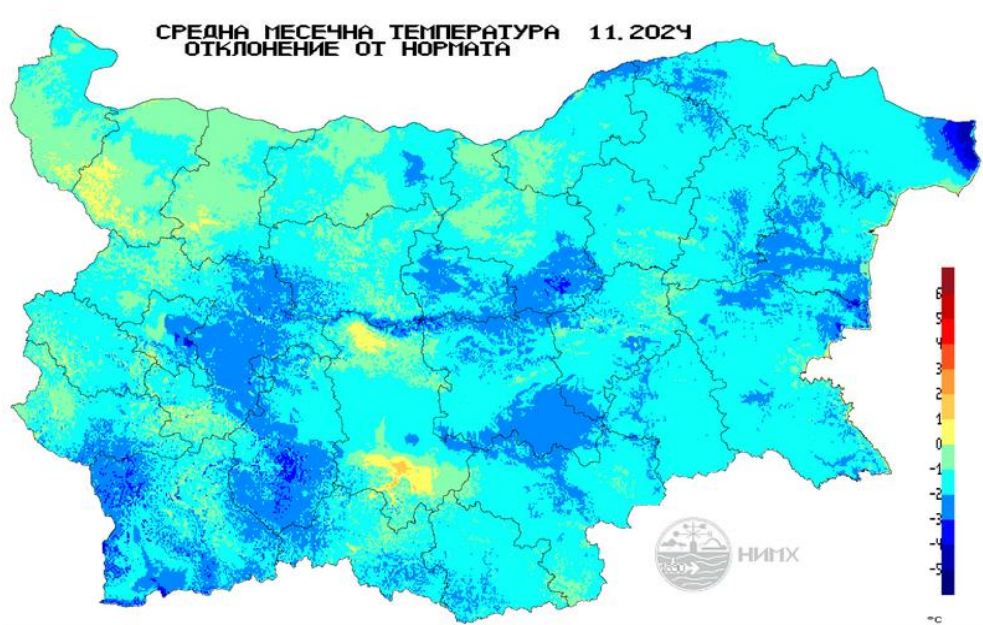
Source: [Bulgarian National Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology](#)

Map 6. Average Temperature November 2024



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

Map 7. November 2024: Deviation from the Average Temperature Norm



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

Attachments:

No Attachments.