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Floods destroy specialty crops - Wisla River back to flood stage

Report Categories:

Grain and Feed

Oilseeds and Products

Strawberries

Fresh Deciduous Fruit

Vegetables

Agriculture in the News

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Report Highlights:

Poland has suffered its worst flooding in over 140 years and farmers are now taking stock, even while unseasonable wet weather continues and the Wisla River again is rising to flood stage. 450,000 hectares of crop land is reported as water damaged or flooded, of roughly 16 million arable acres in the country. FAS Warsaw staff visited points just a few hundred kilometers north and south of the city to see some

of the worst effects of the damage. National output of grains and oilseeds crops remain relatively undamaged, located more north and west of flood damaged areas. Specialty crops and fruits suffered more, with forty percent of Poland's crops such as hops destroyed. Cherry, apple strawberry, and black currants' production will be lower.

General Information:

450,000 hectares in Poland are flooded, affecting roughly 50,000 households including more than 4300 farms with animals. There are 31 agricultural companies (food processors) affected by the flood (including meat and poultry producers, juice producers). In many places, meadows have been flooded or are too wet so there will be problems with the first of three traditional grass cuttings for hay. The grass has grown too high and is losing nutritional value as it is blooming and is still too wet to use cutting equipment. Weather forecasts show more rain for at least a week and the Wisla is back to flood stage. Lower hay production is expected in affected locales. Specialty crop production like hops or black currant has been seriously affected. Millers do not worry because they have stocks from last year. They also know that many farmers keep stocks from last season and they have to get rid of them before new harvest. Farmers have some time to recover because harvest is expected to be late this year. Millers also have offers from Czech and Hungary so they know they can get good quality wheat for a reasonable price. Over the term of this summer and into the fall grain prices should not increase dramatically.

When it comes to national output levels for oilseed and fruit production most recent estimates do not show drastic reductions. Apple production is expected to be 2,300,000 tons (around a 12% decrease); prices are expected to be stable (still low) due to high stocks and the sluggish apple market sales in the EU. Last season apple production was too high and demand from Russia is not likely to increase.

Strawberry production is expected to be 170,000 tons (around 14% decrease) and export prices are expected to go up to even 1300 Euro per ton at the beginning of the season. Cherry production is expected to be 150,000 tons (around 20% decrease) and prices will increase. However, processors will probably not like to pay more than the average for the last two seasons. Processors overshadow the market making price increases difficult. Strawberry markets are watching whether higher levels of production in Hungary and Serbia will offset Poland's difficulties.

Total grain production is estimated at 26-26.5 mln tons (first estimates were 27.5 mln tons). The acreage is not estimated to go down because flood did not affect grain and oilseeds fields (they are far from river banks) and more north and west and not in central and south Poland that has flooded. Production is estimated to be lower due to lower yields. Many farmers could not enter their fields and use crop protection chemicals. Wheat production is estimated at 8.9 mln tons (yields 3.87), mixed grains are estimated at 8 mln (yields 2.96). Corn may drop to 1.5 mln, but it is not yet a significant crop in Poland.

Note: USDA evaluates crop production and its supply and demand estimates for EU member states under its consolidated reporting program and so does not produce official estimates for Poland. For information about USDA's views on the national situation, contact Agata.kingsbury@fas.usda.gov

FAS Experts visit damaged regions.

Although the general food production in Poland seems not to be affected dramatically, there are places that the situation is really tragic. On June 1, 2010, FAS representatives visited two of the three most flooded counties in Poland: Wilków in Lubelskie region and Slubice in Mazowieckie.

Meeting with the mayor of Wilków, agricultural specialist Agata Kingsbury learned that 90% of the county was under water and the cold and rainy weather has not helped: there are 4,000 people who cannot return to their households; the water level is still too high. People were evacuated to neighbor villages; right now many of them live at one of the secondary schools in Rogów village that was not flooded. Wilków county is famous for hop, apple and black currant production. What they need to do right now is to wait for the water level to decrease and start cleaning the damage. People already know that there will be nothing to harvest this season. Wilków county produces 40% of Polish hops, apples and black currant that are delivered to the local fruit juice plant. The plant has been flooded too. It means that many people who lost all their belongings most likely will lose their jobs. The county already has received government help, however the people will be paid as soon as they go back to their houses; right now there is nothing they can do with this cash. Another problem the county will face soon when 4000 people goes back to their damaged homes, will be lack of fridges, washing machines, mattresses, rubber shoes, shovels and farm equipment.

Below is also a link to a film on Youtube recorded by someone flying over Wilkow last week.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLXbi_iqMRI

Floods destroyed farms in the Mazowieckie Wojewodship (north/center of Poland), especially the **Ślubice** municipalities in the district of Plock. Agricultural specialist Jolanta Figurska visited with local firefighters and farmers in the region. About 37% of the Municipality of Ślubice, with a total area of 3500 ha, has been flooded. Except for two poultry producing facilities in the Municipalities of Gąbin (Doldrob Company in Borki) and Ślubice (Chicken production facility in Juliszew), no other large facilities or farms were affected. Local farmers commented that floods will certainly result locally in an increase in the prices of grains (wheat), as well as strawberries and other fruit and vegetables. The Ślubice region is one of the leading commercial strawberry producing areas in Poland. Many farmers in the region own small farms of an area between 2 ha -10 ha. The disaster affected mostly small scale farmers, which in many cases produced for their own consumption. These farms will rely heavily on government funds in order to recover. In most cases each family had a fruit and vegetable garden, which was used for their own consumption. Given the current circumstances these products will now need to be purchased, contributing to increased demand. Twelve villages were affected, destroying 258 buildings and leaving 1,447 people homeless. The community lost 12,000 chickens, and suffered a complete loss of its wheat and strawberries' acreage.

Author Defined:



This picture shows hops flooded out in the Wilkow region, June 1, 2010. Forty percent of Poland's hops has been destroyed. Name brand beers such as Zywiec, Tyskie, and FAS staff favorite Okocim may face higher prices and substitute imports in their formulas, though reports are its possible stocks from last year will suffice.



Floodwaters crash over impromptu dikes. The worst flooding in 140 years overran Poland's ability to control water flow, destroying or damaging crops on 450,000 hectares of land. Hardest hit are root crops, specialty crops, and apples. Wet weather is continuing and the Wisla river, flowing through Krakow and Warsaw is back at flood state June 9.



FAS Warsaw Ag. Specialist Jolanta Figurska is pictured with the second shipment of clothing and household items she delivered to farmers near Slubice. As well, Mrs. Figurska organized a community donation of tuition to send twenty children to camp. The children, have no school to attend. Ambassador Lee Feinstein granted \$50,000 from the State Department to Southern Poland to buy water pumps, an amount matched by the United Parcel Service as the American community mobilizes to support victims.