

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

Date: August 05,2020

Report Number: FR2020-0020

Report Name: French wheat crop down almost 25 percent and wheat exports projected to decline

Country: France

Post: Paris

Report Category: Grain and Feed, Agriculture in the News

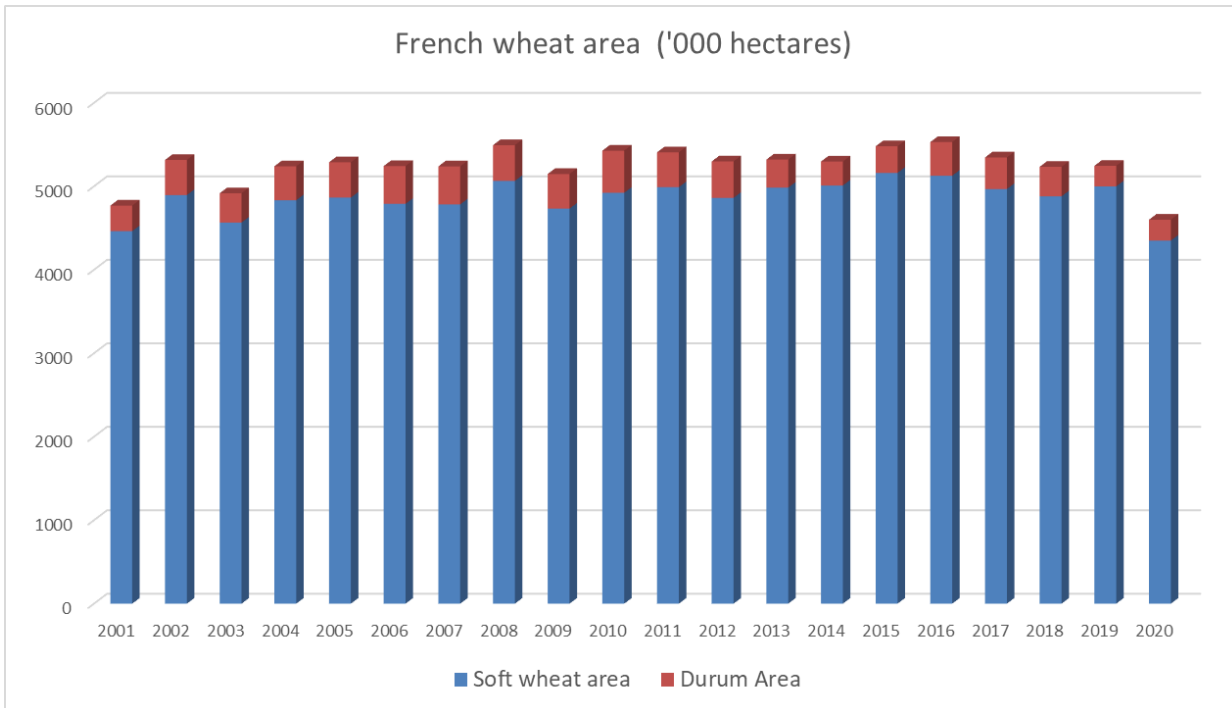
Prepared By: Xavier Audran

Approved By: Kathryn Snipes

Report Highlights:

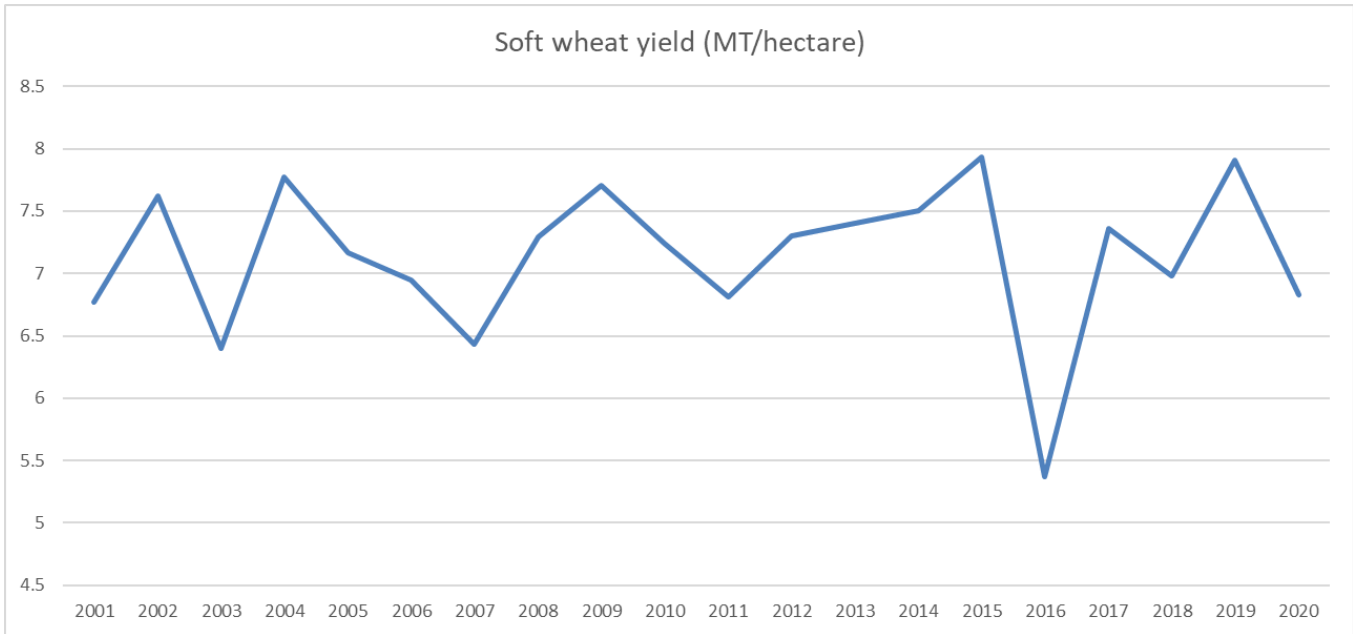
France's 2020 wheat harvest, estimated to be about 31 million metric tons (MMT), means a 25 decline in production as compared to 2019 because of unfavorable weather conditions. France will likely export significantly less wheat, projected to be 13-15 MMT in marketing year (MY) 2020/21 as compared to 2019 that had exports near 23 MMT. Barley production is also down from 2019 but there may still be a good corn crop despite persistent drought throughout France.

By early August 2020, more than 90 percent of the French wheat crop had been harvested and with the low volume of grain filling the elevators, the mood is gloomy among wheat producers. The soft wheat crop is estimated to be the third smallest in history, slightly above the disastrous 2016 crop. While the early forecast for France’s soft wheat crop was approximately 34 to 36 MMT, the latest estimates for it are about 29.5 to 29.7 MMT. Some analysts such as the AGRITEL consulting foresee a lower crop of 29.2 MMT. With the durum crop estimated to be 1.3 MMT, the total French wheat crop will not exceed 31 MMT, almost 25 percent lower than in 2019.

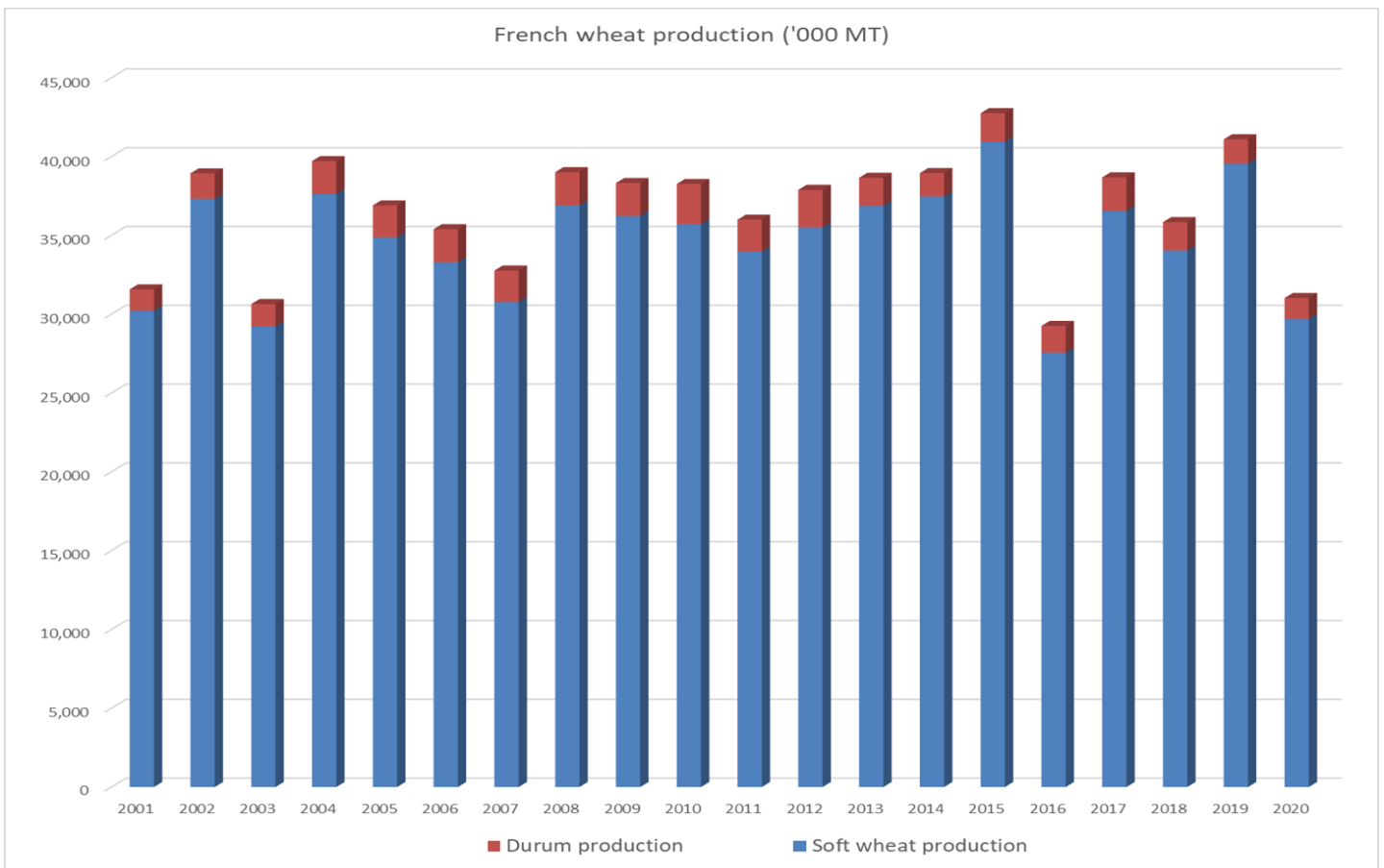


(Source FAS Paris)

The limited harvest crop is due to several factors. Heavy rain in fall 2019 prevented sowing winter wheat in the best conditions and reducing planted areas by 0.7 million hectares (about 1 million acres). A mild winter led to pest infestations, particularly aphids that impacted health of the crop and its development. The aphid infestation was hard for farmers to control because of the Government of France’s ban on several pesticides that are effective against those pests. The winter was followed by a dry spring leading to moisture stress and limiting grain filling, reducing its size and weight. Farmers also report that yields that vary widely between fields, as much as 7 MT different even on adjacent fields. Such variations are due to the soil capacity to hold moisture as well as the date of sowing. On the other hand, the quality of the harvested wheat is estimated to be good, with a higher than average protein content.

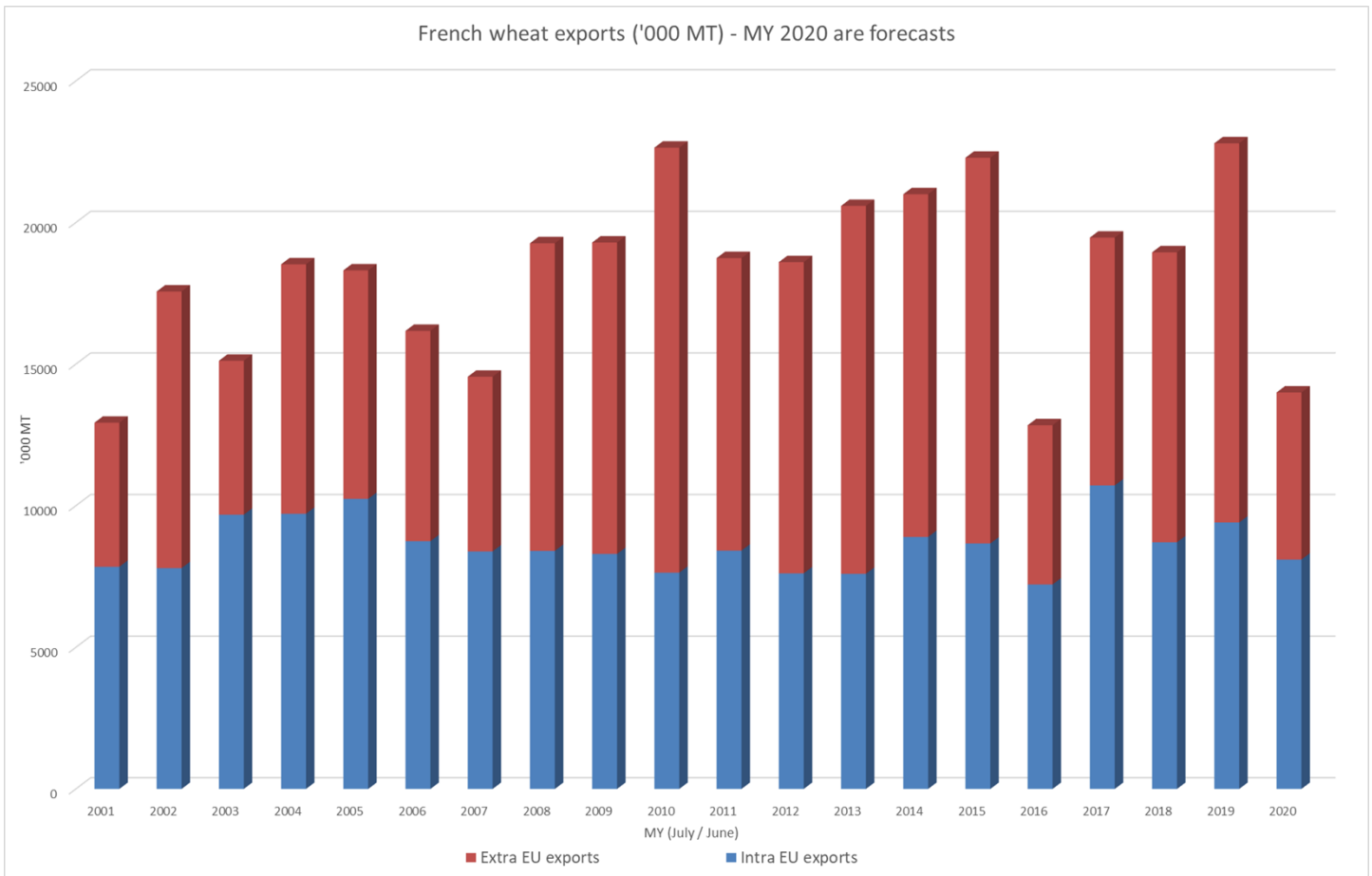


(Source FAS Paris)



(Source FAS Paris)

The small wheat crop means that in MY 2020/21, France will not be able to export as much wheat as in the previous year. France shipped close to 23 MMT of wheat, particularly to Algeria, Morocco, and Egypt in MY 2019/20. Analysts estimate the French wheat exportable surplus at 13 to 15 MMT in MY 2020/21.



(Source FAS Paris)

The same weather patterns and pest infestation that negatively impacted the French wheat crop also lowered the barley crop to 11.3 MMT despite higher areas planted to barley. On the other hand, the corn crop is deemed in good to excellent condition, in spite of the drought, in part because the southwest of France is less impacted by the drought and a significant part of the corn crop is irrigated. However, the corn farmers are concerned that the persistent drought could impact the grain filling during the critical months of August and September.

Attachments:

No Attachments.