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## **Report Name:** Grain and Feed Update

**Country:** South Africa - Republic of

**Post:** Pretoria

**Report Category:** Grain and Feed

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### **Report Highlights:**

Post's corn crop estimate for South Africa for marketing year 2024/25 has been marginally lowered due to a reduced expected planting area. The production season started slowly with sporadic rainfall in October 2024 and a heatwave in November 2024, but conditions improved with continuous rainfall from mid-December. South Africa should maintain its status as a net exporter of corn in marketing year 2024/25, though sufficient rainfall for rest of the season will be a necessity to realize optimal yields. Despite tight stock levels, South Africa is continuing to export corn to neighboring countries where the demand is high, pushing local corn prices to record levels and creating a situation where imports are necessary to support domestic corn consumption demands. The first shipment of U.S. corn arrived in South Africa after the genetically engineered asynchronous approval issues were resolved late last year.

## Executive Summary

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of South Africa's corn market, focusing on production, consumption, and trade dynamics. For marketing year (MY<sup>1</sup>) 2024/25, FAS/Pretoria lowered the previous forecast for planted corn area to 3.0 MHa, slightly reducing the corn crop estimate to 16.0 million metric tons (MMT). The production season faced initial challenges with sporadic early season rainfall and a heatwave in November 2024, which affected the progress of corn plantings. However, conditions improved significantly with continuous rainfall from mid-December, allowing corn plantings to continue, albeit later than normal. The Crop Estimates Committee (CEC) will release its preliminary area planted estimates later this month, providing a clearer picture of the area planted with corn in South Africa for MY 2024/25.

Commercial demand for corn in MY 2024/25 is forecasted upwards to 12.4 MMT, reflecting a higher demand for animal feed. The broiler industry, which represents 40 percent of total feed sales, has shown a 6 percent increase in production due to recovery from the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) outbreak in 2023 and improved electricity supply.

South Africa is projected to remain a net exporter of corn in MY 2024/25, with an expected commercial crop of over 15.0 MMT. However, export estimates have been revised down to 1.5 MMT as a relatively lower expected planted area will reduce corn availability for the export markets, coupled with increased local demand for corn in the feed industry. In addition, year-end stocks are estimated to recover from the abnormally low levels of MY 2023/24, expanding by 75 percent to 1.4 MMT in MY 2024/25.

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<sup>1</sup> *The MYs used in the text refer to the USDA marketing years in the PS&D table, and do not necessarily correspond with the marketing years used by the South African grain industry.*

## **CORN**

### **Production**

FAS/Pretoria lowered its previous forecast for planted corn area in MY 2024/25 to 3.0 MHa, marginally reducing South Africa's estimated corn crop (including commercial and subsistence producers) to 16.0 MMT. South Africa's 2024/25 production season started off slowly with sporadic rainfall during October 2024 and a heatwave in November 2024, affecting the progress in corn plantings. However, in mid-December respectable and continued rainfall over most parts of South Africa's corn production areas finally started. Early season plantings that suffered during the heatwaves recovered or were replanted, except for in some areas where producers struggled to get into fields to finish plantings due to the wet conditions. In general, corn plantings in MY2024/25 are later than the 5-year average due to the delayed rains. South Africa's optimal planting window for corn closes at the end of December, but producers can still plant sunflower seed until the end of January.

The Crop Estimates Committee (CEC) will release its preliminary area planted estimates on January 28, 2025, which will paint a clearer picture of the area planted with corn in South Africa in MY 2024/25. It will also indicate the impact of the drier early season conditions and wetter condition since mid-December on the final area planted with corn. However, it is still early in the season, and sufficient rainfall during February and March 2025, especially during the corn plants' grain filling stages, will be a necessity to realize optimal yields. Weather forecasters predict La Niña weather conditions for the rest of the season, which generally supports sufficient rainfall and conducive production conditions in South Africa's corn producing areas.

Table 1 details area planted, yield, and production figures for commercial white corn and yellow corn as well as corn produced by subsistence farmers for MY 2022/23 (actual), MY 2023/24 (estimate), and MY 2024/25 (forecast).

**Table 1***Area Planted, Yield, and Production of Commercial and Subsistence Corn in South Africa*

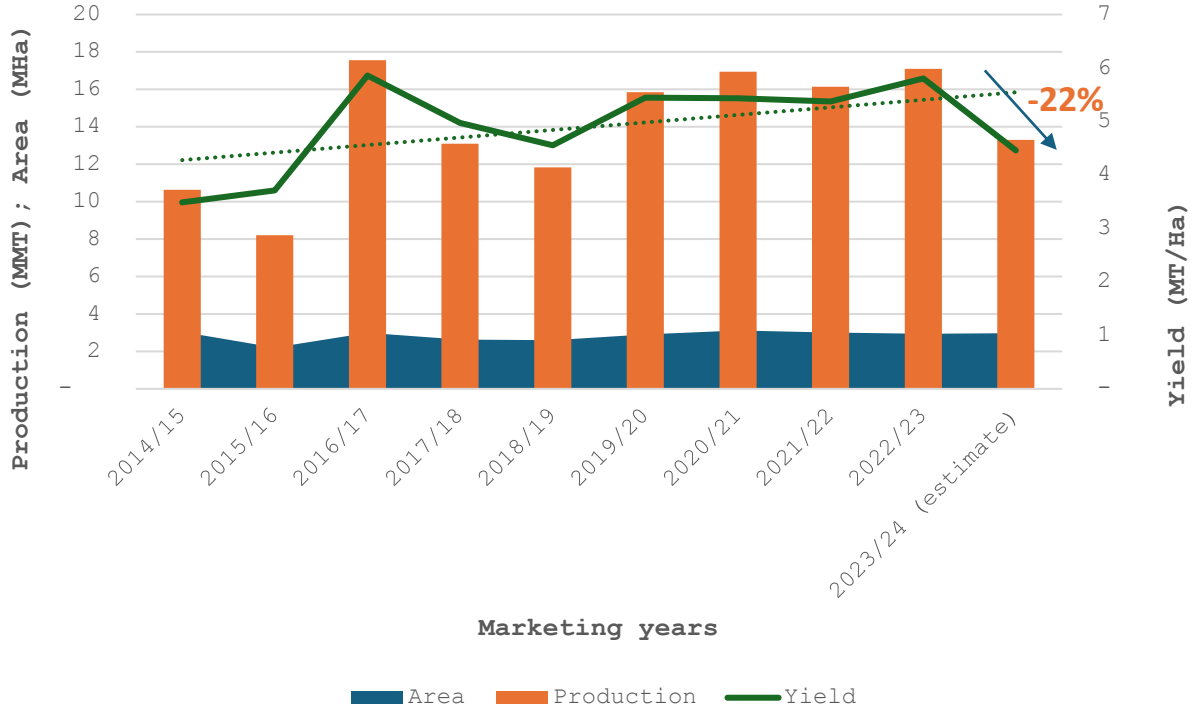
	<b>2022/23 (actual)</b>			<b>2023/24 (estimate)</b>			<b>2024/25 (forecast)</b>		
	<b>Area (1,000ha)</b>	<b>Yield (MT/ Ha)</b>	<b>Prod. (1,000MT)</b>	<b>Area (1,000ha)</b>	<b>Yield (MT/ Ha)</b>	<b>Prod. (1,000MT)</b>	<b>Area (1,000ha)</b>	<b>Yield (MT/ Ha)</b>	<b>Prod. (1,000MT)</b>
<b><u>Commercial Production</u></b>									
White	1,521	5.6	8,505	1,555	3.9	6,007	1,600	5.0	8,000
Yellow	1,065	7.4	7,925	1,081	6.2	6,717	1,050	7.0	7,340
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>2,586</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>16,430</b>	<b>2,636</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>12,724</b>	<b>2,650</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>15,340</b>
<b><u>Subsistence Production</u></b>									
White	279	1.7	473	268	1.5	408	280	1.7	470
Yellow	80	2.4	191	79	2.1	167	80	2.4	190
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>664</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>575</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>660</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,945</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>17,094</b>	<b>2,983</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>13,299</b>	<b>3,010</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>16,000</b>

**Source:** FAS/Pretoria estimates and data from the Crop Estimates Committee

On November 27, 2024, the CEC released its final production estimate for MY 2023/24's summer rainfall crops (see [Crop Estimates](#)). According to the CEC, South Africa produced the smallest corn crop in 5 years at 13.3 MMT (12.7 MMT from commercial producers and 575,000 MT from subsistence producers), 22 percent less than the previous marketing year (also refer to Figure 1). An *El Niño* induced mid-summer drought in 2024 coupled with excessive heat across South Africa during the crucial vegetative and flowering stages for corn reduced the yield potential of the crop. The CEC estimates a national average yield of 4.5 MT/ha, 22 percent lower than the previous marketing year average yield of 5.8 MT/ha. The three main corn-producing areas in South Africa, namely the Free State (42 percent), Mpumalanga (27 percent), and North West (10 percent) provinces produced collectively 80 percent of MY 2023/24's corn crop. The white corn crop is estimated at 6.4 MMT and the yellow corn crop at 6.9 MMT, respectively, 2.6 MMT and 1.2 MMT smaller than in MY 2022/23.

**Figure 1**

*Area Planted, Production, and Yields of Corn in South Africa over the Past 10 Years*



**Source:** United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

**Consumption**

FAS/Pretoria revised its previous estimates for the commercial demand for corn in MY 2023/24 and MY 2024/25 upwards to 12.2 MMT and 12.4 MMT, respectively, on higher animal feed demand. South Africa’s broiler industry recovered in 2024 after the outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in 2023 (see also [South Africa battles highly pathogenic avian influenza](#)). That recovery, coupled with a rapid improvement in the reliability and consistency of electricity supply in South Africa after a period of sustained shortages (see [Load shedding-economic strain on food supply chains](#)), supported an estimated 6 percent rise in broiler production in 2024 (also refer to [Poultry and Products Annual](#)). The poultry industry is South Africa’s largest individual agricultural industry, representing 40 percent of total feed sales totaling more than 5 MMT (also refer to [The South African Animal Feed Industry](#))

Table 2 outlines the commercial consumption of white and yellow corn in South Africa for MY 2022/23 (estimate), MY 2023/24 (estimate), and MY 2024/25 (forecast). Please note consumption figures in the Production, Supply, and Distribution (PS&D) table (Table 6) also include on-farm usage and corn utilized by the subsistence farming sector.

**Table 2***Commercial Consumption of White and Yellow Corn in South Africa*

CORN (1,000 MT)	White	Yellow	Total	White	Yellow	Total	White	Yellow	Total
<b>Human</b>	5,364	578	<b>5,942</b>	5,500	600	<b>6,100</b>	5,650	600	<b>6,250</b>
<b>Animal</b>	1,097	4,696	<b>5,793</b>	100	5,900	<b>6,000</b>	500	5,550	<b>6,050</b>
<b>Other</b>	22	34	<b>56</b>	50	50	<b>100</b>	50	50	<b>100</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,483</b>	<b>5,308</b>	<b>11,791</b>	<b>5,650</b>	<b>6,550</b>	<b>12,200</b>	<b>6,200</b>	<b>6,200</b>	<b>12,400</b>

**Source:** FAS/Pretoria using data from the South Africa Grain Information Services

**Trade***Exports*

South Africa should maintain its status as a net exporter of corn in MY 2024/25 with an expected commercial crop above 15.0 MMT. However, FAS/Pretoria revised its previous forecast for South Africa's corn exports in MY 2024/25 downwards to 1.5 MMT, as a relatively lower expected planted area will reduce corn availability for the export markets, coupled with an expected higher demand for corn in the local feed industry. In addition, year-end stocks are estimated to recover from the abnormally low levels of MY 2023/24, expanding by 75 percent to 1.4 MMT.

South Africa is expected to export about 2 MMT of corn in MY 2023/24. South Africa's corn exports focus mainly on neighboring countries where import demand is elevated after last year's drought-stricken season. With more than two-thirds of MY 2023/24 past, South Africa has already exported 1.6 MMT of corn, including 1 MMT of white corn and 564,000 MT of yellow corn (see Table 3). However, a year-to-date comparison indicates 40 percent less corn exports than the previous marketing year, which suggests tight stocks after the drought in 2024 and a ceasing of corn exports to markets in Asia. Asian markets imported more than 1.7 MMT of corn, especially yellow corn, from South Africa in MY 2022/23. On the other hand, year-to-date white corn exports are 50 percent higher than in MY 2022/23, driven by strong demand from Zimbabwe, where the impact of the 2024 drought was especially damaging. For the rest of MY 2023/24, FAS/Pretoria expects corn exports to continue at the current rate to neighboring countries until the start of the next corn harvest in May 2025.

**Table 3***South Africa's Exports of Corn in MY 2022/23 and MY 2023/24*

<u>MY 2022/23</u> <i>Full year</i> (May 1, 2023 – Apr 30, 2024)				<u>MY 2023/24</u> <i>36 weeks</i> (May 1, 2024, to January 3, 2025)			
<u>Countries</u>	<u>White corn</u>	<u>Yellow corn</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Countries</u>	<u>White corn</u>	<u>Yellow corn</u>	<u>Total</u>
	(1,000 MT)				(1,000 MT)		
<u>Export Destinations</u>				<u>Export Destinations</u>			
Zimbabwe	447	191	638	Zimbabwe	584	324	908
South Korea	0	492	492	Botswana	138	73	211
Japan	0	468	468	Namibia	148	45	193
Taiwan	0	463	463	Mozambique	65	51	116
Botswana	262	46	308	Eswatini	36	63	99
Namibia	178	62	240	Lesotho	59	3	62
Mozambique	137	65	202	Saudi Arabia	0	4	4
Vietnam	0	179	179	Zambia	0	1	1
Eswatini	61	84	145				
China	0	112	112				
Lesotho	69	3	72				
Kenya	68	0	68				
Guatemala	43	0	43				
Ghana	4	2	6				
Saudi Arabia	0	5	5				
Malawi	0	1	1				
<b>Total Exports</b>	<b>1,270</b>	<b>2,173</b>	<b>3,443</b>	<b>Total Exports</b>	<b>1,030</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>1,594</b>

**Source:** FAS/Pretoria using data from the South Africa Grain Information Services*Imports*

FAS/Pretoria does not foresee any corn imports for South Africa in MY 2024/25. However, FAS/Pretoria estimates that South Africa will import approximately 800,000 MT of corn in MY 2023/24.

South Africa already imported 465,000 MT of yellow corn from Argentina and Brazil so far in MY 2023/24 and the first shipment of white corn (23,768 MT) from the United States is currently offloading. FAS/Pretoria worked closely with all stakeholders to resolve the asynchronous genetically engineered (GE) events to allow United States' corn into South Africa (see also [Market Opens for United States Corn](#)). Asynchronous GE approvals pose a significant

risk to trade since South Africa applies zero tolerance for unintentional presence of GE events in food and feed imports. On November 19, 2024, the Department of Agriculture informed stakeholders that all GE corn events that caused asynchrony with the United States had been approved and that import permits will be issued for U.S. GE corn. Another shipment containing 46,000 MT of white corn is expected in February 2025.

As South Africa continues exporting corn to its neighboring countries where the demand is high, a situation is created where domestic corn consumption demands require imports. In addition, the high cost of transportation from South Africa’s summer rainfall production regions indicates that it could cost less to import corn at the current price levels to the southern ports of South Africa than to transport South Africa’s domestic crop to millers and feed manufacturers located in the southern and western coastal areas. South Africa’s corn in the northern region will continue to serve the demand in neighboring countries.

**Table 4**

*South Africa’s Imports of Corn in MY 2023/24*

<u><b>MY 2023/24</b></u>			
<i>36 weeks</i>			
<b>(May 1, 2024, to January 3, 2025)</b>			
<b>Countries</b>	<b>White corn</b>	<b>Yellow corn</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>(1,000 MT)</b>		
Argentina		360	360
Brazil		105	105
United states	24		24
<b>Total Imports</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>489</b>

**Source:** FAS/Pretoria using data from the South Africa Grain Information Services

### **Marketing**

South Africa’s local corn prices are at record levels, an indication of tight stock levels after a 22 percent drop in production in MY 2023/24 (see also Figure 2 and Figure 3). South Africa also continues corn exports to support food security in neighboring countries where the 2024 El Niño-induced drought diminished corn production in the region. This has bolstered demand for South Africa’s corn supplies, pushing local prices to elevated levels. In addition, the recent devaluation of South Africa’s currency against the U.S. dollar, coupled with a rise in international corn prices, supported the record local price levels.

Currently, year-on-year local white corn prices are almost 80 percent higher, trading at R6,776/MT (\$354/MT), after reaching a record price level of 6,920/MT (\$361/MT) on December 24, 2024. Yellow corn prices reached a new historical high level on January 13,



2025, of R5,647/MT (\$295/MT), a year-on-year surge of 55 percent. Local white corn is trading at more than R1,000/MT (\$52/MT) above yellow corn, illustrating the higher demand for white corn compared to yellow corn in the region. Table 5 indicates the current and futures prices of South African corn as of January 13, 2025. Local corn prices are expected to continue trading at elevated levels until the start of the harvesting season in a couple of months.

**Table 5**

*Local Corn Prices*

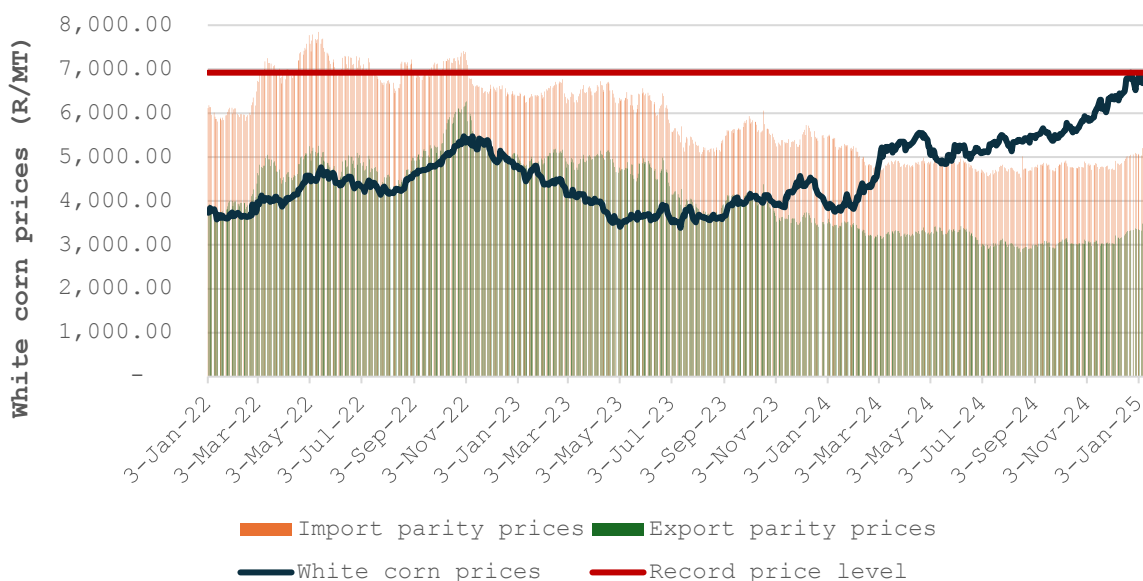
Commodity	Current and futures prices (year/month)				
	<u>2025/01</u>	<u>2025/03</u>	<u>2025/05</u>	<u>2025/07</u>	<u>2025/12</u>
White corn	R6,776/MT (\$354/MT)	R6,154/MT (\$321/MT)	R4,780/MT (\$249/MT)	R4,607/MT (\$240/MT)	R4,760/MT (\$248/MT)
Yellow corn	R5,647/MT (\$295/MT)	R5,455/MT (\$285/MT)	R4,252/MT (\$222/MT)	R4,198/MT (\$219/MT)	R4,369/MT (\$228/MT)

**Source:** FAS/Pretoria using data from GrainSA as of 01/13/2025

**Note:** US\$1 = Rand 19.15 (01/13/2025)

**Figure 2**

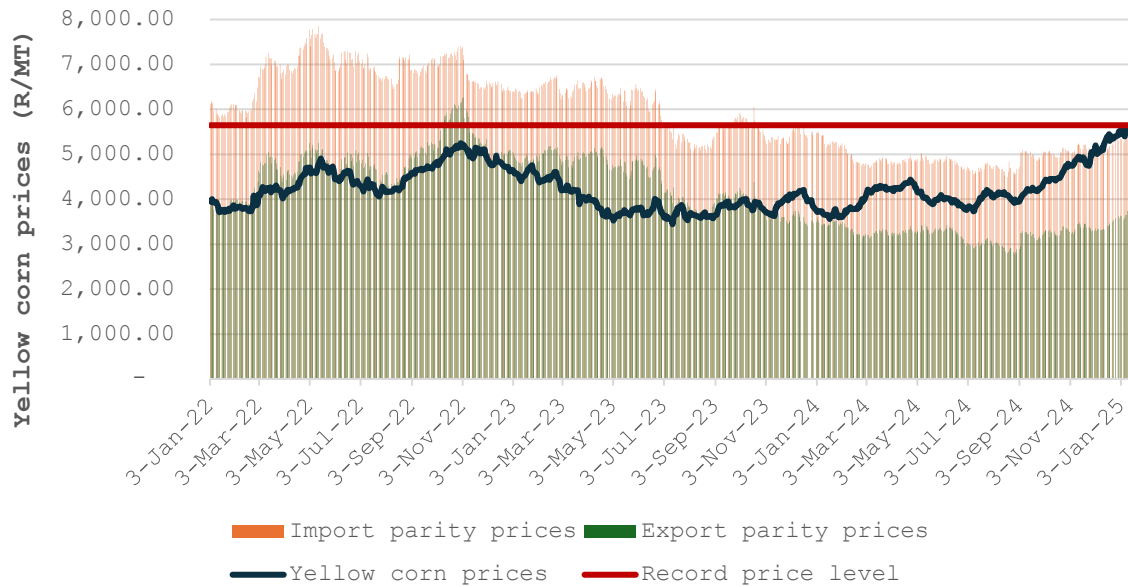
*The Trend in the Local Price for White Corn since January 2022*



**Source:** FAS/Pretoria using data from GrainSA

**Figure 3**

*The Trend in the Local Price for Yellow Corn since January 2022*



**Source:** FAS/Pretoria using data from GrainSA

### Stocks

Year-end stocks are forecast to recover from the abnormally low levels estimated for MY 2023/24, expanding by 75 percent to 1.4 MMT in MY 2024/25 on higher local production and less exports, to equal about six weeks of commercial utilization. In MY 2023/24, stock levels are expected to drop by 67 percent to 805,000 MT, the lowest level in 10 years, due to a drop in local production and higher corn demand in the region. The South African Grain Information Services (Sagis) calculated year-end stocks for MY 2022/23 at 2.4 MMT. Stocks are primarily stored by producer-owned agribusinesses (formerly cooperatives), traders, and processors.

**Table 6***Corn Production, Supply and Distribution*

Corn Market Year Begins South Africa	2022/2023		2023/2024		2024/2025	
	May 2023		May 2024		May 2025	
	USDA Official	New Post	USDA Official	New Post	USDA Official	New Post
Area Harvested (1000 HA)	2945	2945	3000	2983	3150	3010
Beginning Stocks (1000 MT)	1954	1954	2405	2405	805	805
Production (1000 MT)	17100	17100	13400	13300	17000	16000
MY Imports (1000 MT)	33	33	600	800	0	0
TY Imports (1000 MT)	0	0	254	254	350	546
TY Imp. from U.S. (1000 MT)	1	1	0	0	0	0
Total Supply (1000 MT)	19087	19087	16405	16505	17805	16805
MY Exports (1000 MT)	3443	3443	2000	2000	2800	1500
TY Exports (1000 MT)	3619	3619	2464	2464	2600	2100
Feed and Residual (1000 MT)	6614	6614	6800	6900	6800	7000
FSI Consumption (1000 MT)	6625	6625	6800	6800	6800	6900
Total Consumption (1000 MT)	13239	13239	13600	13700	13600	13900
Ending Stocks (1000 MT)	2405	2405	805	805	1405	1405
Total Distribution (1000 MT)	19087	19087	16405	16505	17805	16805
Yield (MT/HA)	5.8065	5.8065	4.4667	4.4586	5.3968	5.3156

(1000 HA) ,(1000 MT) ,(MT/HA)

MY = Marketing Year, begins with the month listed at the top of each column

TY = Trade Year, which for Corn begins in October for all countries. TY 2024/2025 = October 2024 - September 2025

OFFICIAL DATA CAN BE ACCESSED AT: [PSD Online Advanced Query](#)**Attachments:**

No Attachments