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Report Highlights:

The Korean government revised its marketing year (MY) 2024/25 rice production estimate down to reflect a 2-percent yield reduction from extreme heat, untimely rains, and pest damage. Amid political pressure from farm groups to counteract declining farmgate rice prices, the government announced its long-term rice reformation plan measures in December 2024 to address the nation's chronic oversupply of rice. The plan includes policies to reduce rice acreage by substituting to other crops, as well as facilitating consumption and exports, including a 50 percent increase in food aid donations. The Korea Agro-Fisheries and Trade Corporation (aT) filled all WTO rice import quotas by the end of 2024. As of January 2025, aT had resumed table rice auctions of rice imported from Vietnam and Thailand, but not from the United States.

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Rice

Rice Production

On November 15, 2024, Statistics Korea (KOSTAT) released its final production estimate of the 2024 rice crop at 3,585,000 metric tons (MT, milled basis), about a 2-percent decrease from KOSTAT's initial October estimate due to unexpected yield losses. The result was based on a field survey by KOSTAT after the rice harvest in Korea was completed showing 2 percent lower yield, with 6,236 sampled farms in total – 6,220 for rice paddy and 16 for upland rice. The final harvested area was unchanged from the previous estimate at 698,000 hectares.

According to the KOSTAT survey, rice yield averaged 5,138 kg per hectare in MY 2024/25, below both the 10-year average of 5,218 kg per hectare and the 3-year average of 5,235 kg per hectare. Damage from widespread brown planthopper infestations deteriorated further after KOSTAT's last crop survey was completed in late September. Heavy rainfall and high temperatures from September to October exposed rice to more extreme pest infestation than usual. Rainfall from September to the first half of October measured 263.2 mm in 2024, up from 198.0 mm in 2023. The average temperature from September to the first half of October measured 22.2 degrees Celsius in 2024, up from 20.6 degrees Celsius in 2023.

For further details, see [KOSTAT's announcement](#) on Rice Production in 2024 (in Korean). Please refer to the previous [2024 Grain and Feed Update](#) for the historical production trends.

Table 1
Rice Production Estimates by KOSTAT

Rice Production Estimates from October and November Surveys (Milled Basis, Calendar Year (CY))					
	CY2023	CY2024			Change from CY2023 (Percent)
		1st Estimate (Oct.) ^{1/}	Final (Nov) ^{2/}	Change from Oct. Estimate (Percent)	
Area (1,000 ha)	708	698	698	0.0	-1.5
Yield (kg/ha)	5,229	5,241	5,138	-2.0	-1.8
Production (1,000MT)	3,702	3,657	3,585	-2.0	-3.2

1/ Based on KOSTAT Survey Results (October 2024)

2/ Based on KOSTAT Survey Final Results (November 2024)

Government Policy

In December 2024, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) announced a long-term rice reformation plan starting in 2025 that aims to resolve the chronic rice oversupply issue by reducing acreage and capturing new demand. The plan features five priority areas.

1) Reduction in rice acreage (Strategic Crop Direct Payment Plan)

The Ministry aims to reduce rice acreage by 80,000 ha in 2025, which corresponds to production of about 400,000 MT of milled rice. This target represents an 11-percent acreage reduction from

the prior year by substituting rice acreage with other crops such as soybean, forage, and sesame seed. The Ministry also plans to limit rice production in reclamation areas by 2030.

2) Rice Quality Improvement

Rice cultivation in Korea has emphasized yield improvement for decades, and MAFRA has recently shifted its priority to rice quality. With that, MAFRA will support development and distribution of high-quality rice varieties, increase the acreage of eco-friendly cultivars, and establish mandatory labeling of protein content in rice.

3) New Demand Development

The Ministry will encourage local industries to consume more newly harvested rice by reducing old crop distributions from government reserves. The Ministry also plans to build a dedicated rice processing complex for exported products and will to facilitate exports of processed rice products. Finally, food aid donations via the World Food Programme (WFP) will be increased by 50,000 MT starting in 2025.

4) Fortifying Local Distribution Competitiveness

The MAFRA plan emphasizes high-quality rice varieties by reducing government purchases of targeted rice varieties deemed high yielding but low-quality. Additionally, the government will purchase and designate a few rice processing complexes (RPC) exclusively for high-quality rice distribution. It seeks to streamline the current government grain management system to encourage more engagement by private sectors.

5) Support on R&D for high-quality rice and capture new demand

The Ministry will support distribution of seed and cultivation technology for alternative crops in rice paddy fields, such as soybean, sesame seed, and specialty rice varieties. To meet global trends, the Ministry will invest in research and development of selected promising products such as long-grain rice, which is popular for foreign communities living in Korea. Other specialty varieties, such as a health functional rice that helps reduce blood sugar levels, are also under development.

For more information, see the [MAFRA press release](#) of published on December 12, 2024 (in Korean).

Strategic Crop Direct Payment Plan

The Ministry announced it would increase the budget for the Strategic Crop Direct Payment Program by 30 percent to 244 billion Korean won (\$174 million) in 2025, citing the policy's recent success in helping to relieve the oversupply of rice. The detailed plan consisting of regional acreage allocations has not been published yet. It is expected that the government will allocate acreage targets to each local government and provide incentives to localities and farmers for meeting the targets.

Rice Consumption

Post Seoul has revised the MY 2024/25 rice consumption up by 3.9 percent (160,000 MT) from the previous report to 4,110,000 MT due to the government's policies to encourage greater use of rice in food and beverage processing and feed. These policies are not expected to reverse the steady decline in household table rice consumption.

Stocks for Feed Use

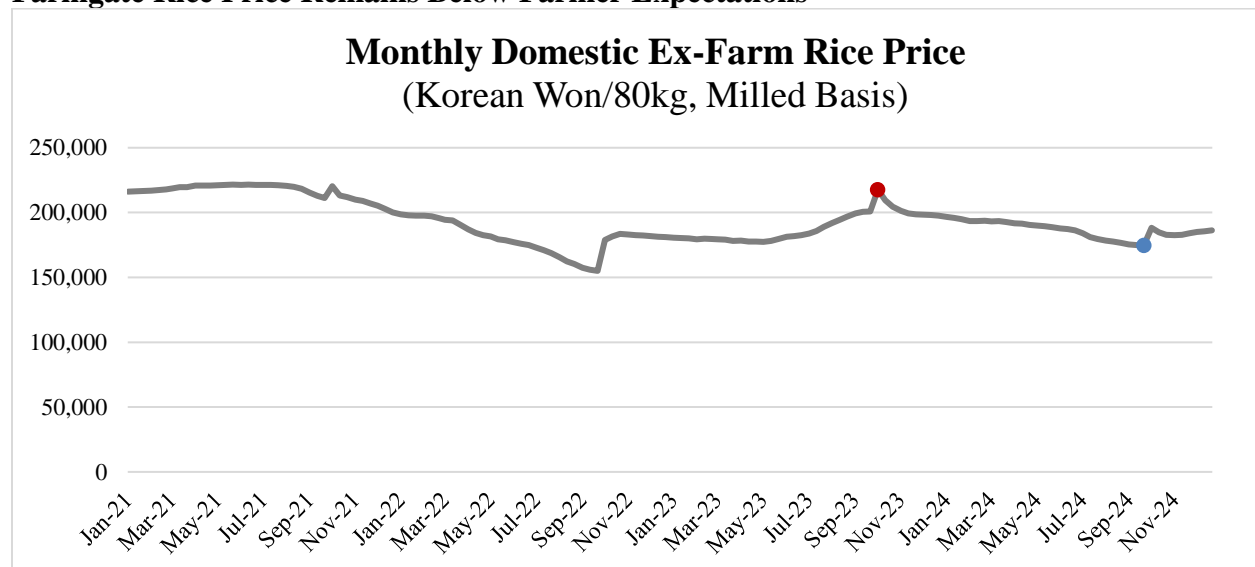
On November 1, 2024, MAFRA announced that it would transfer 300,000 metric tons (MT) of government reserves into the local feed industry, responding to further declines in the domestic rice price since mid-October 2024. The November stock transfer followed previously announced measures in early September and mid-October, when 105,000 MT of government stocks were transferred into distilled liquor production (70,000 MT) and feed (35,000 MT). The September announcement was the earliest announcement the Ministry had made on rice supply measures since 2005.

For further details, please refer to the MAFRA [press release](#) (in Korean) announcing the transfer of an additional 300,000 MT of rice stocks to feed, published on November 1, 2024.

Prices Remain Low

The domestic rice price saw a slight uptick as of October 5, 2024, and has remained relatively flat since then. According to KOSTAT, the national average ex-farm rice price was 187,348 won per 80kg bag on January 15, 2025. Although local agricultural media outlets have expressed optimism about the price having increased from a low of 182,700 won on November 5, it is still 4.3 percent below the same time last year (195,832 won).

Figure 1
Farmgate Rice Price Remains Below Farmer Expectations



Source: Korean Statistical Information Service (KOSIS)

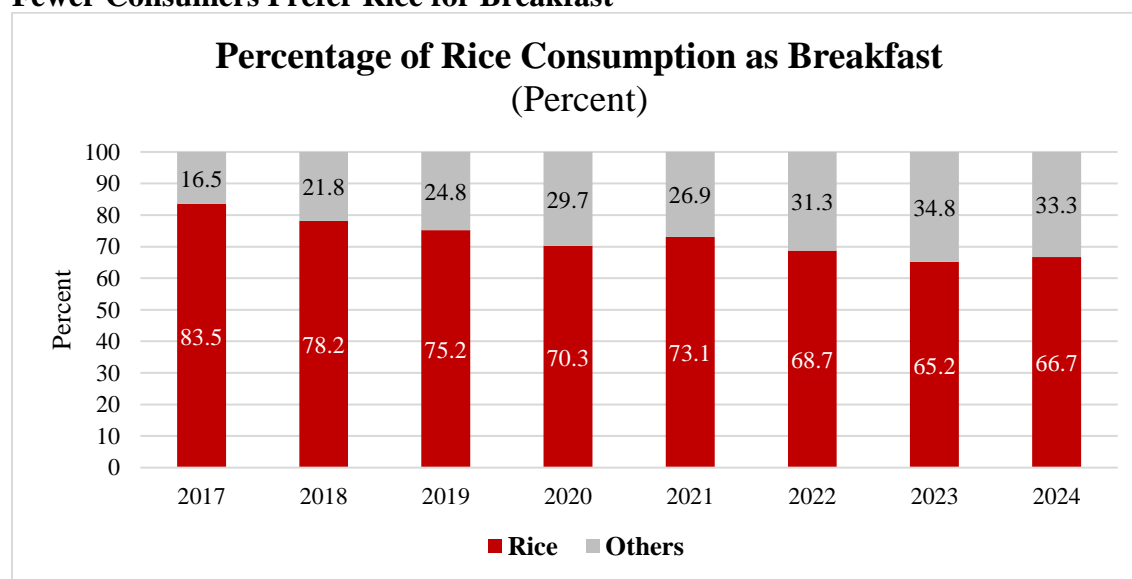
Throughout 2024, farmer groups advocated for further market interventions to counter declining rice prices, staging protests in multiple cities. Four agricultural bills supported by the farmers, including an amendment to the Grain Management Act, were passed by the National Assembly but vetoed by Prime Minister and Acting President Han Duck-soo on December 19, 2024. According to a press release by MAFRA, the Ministry opposed the amended Grain Management Act on the grounds that it would exacerbate existing issues with the country's chronic oversupply of rice. On January 8, 2025, during the National Assembly's plenary session, the four agricultural bills – including the amended Grain Management Act – failed to garner the necessary two-thirds majority to overturn a presidential veto.

For more information, see the [press release](#) (in Korean) detailing MAFRA's position on the four agricultural bills, published on December 19, 2024.

Per Capita Consumption Declines

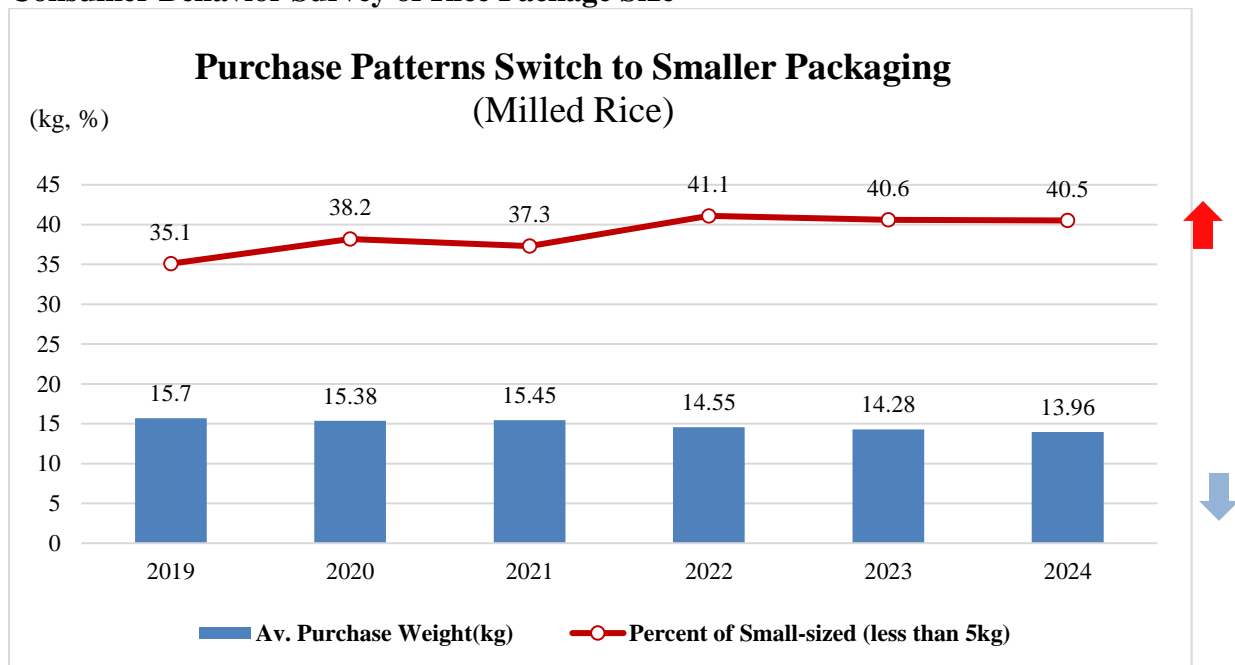
Per capita consumption of rice in CY 2023 was 56.4 kg, and MAFRA expects consumption to decline further to an estimated 54.4kg in CY 2024 and 53.3kg in CY 2025. The continuous decline in rice consumption, especially among young adults, is exemplified by the growing preference for alternative breakfast meals (e.g. bread and sandwiches), and the rising rate of skipping breakfast. A consumer behavior survey published by the Korea Rural Economic Institute (KREI) in January 2025 showed that 66.7 percent of Korean consumers preferred rice for breakfast in 2024, down from 83.5 percent in 2017. Additionally, rice portions are shrinking among those who still purchase rice, with reduced package sizes becoming more common. The KREI survey found that more than 40 percent of commercialized milled rice is packed in bags less than 5 kg (Figure 3). Survey results also confirmed the long-term pattern that consumers now prioritize quality rather than price when buying rice, with 34 percent of recipients responding that they consider flavor to be the most important attribute, higher than price, which was favored by 22 percent (Figure 4).

Figure 2
Fewer Consumers Prefer Rice for Breakfast



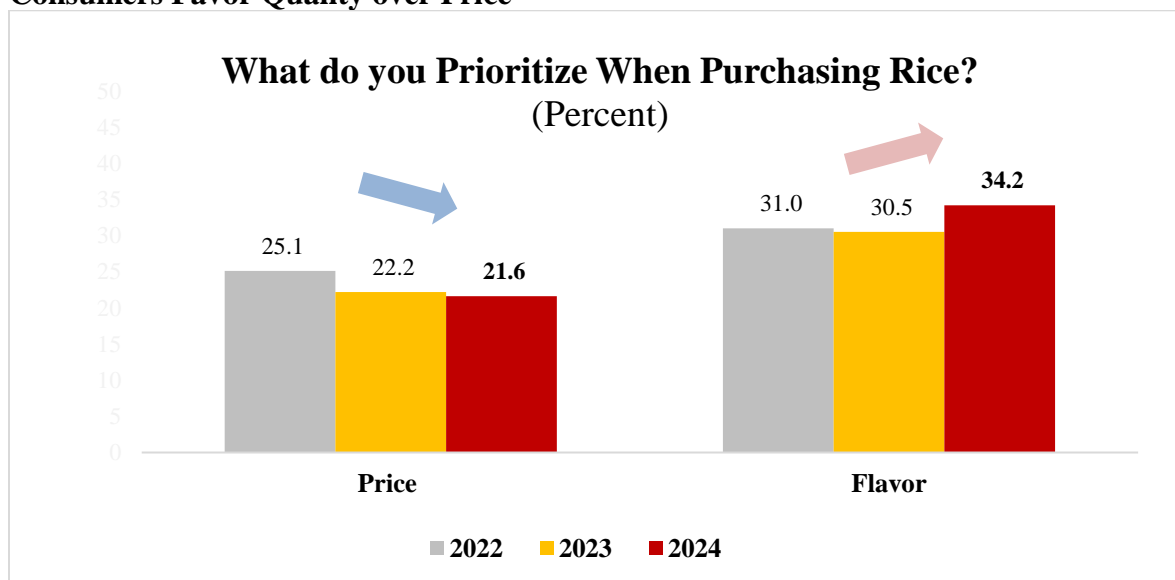
Source: Consumer Behavior Survey Result 2024 by Korea Rural Economic Institute (KREI)

Figure 3
Consumer Behavior Survey of Rice Package Size



Source: Consumer Behavior Survey Result 2024 by Korea Rural Economic Institute (KREI)

Figure 4
Consumers Favor Quality over Price

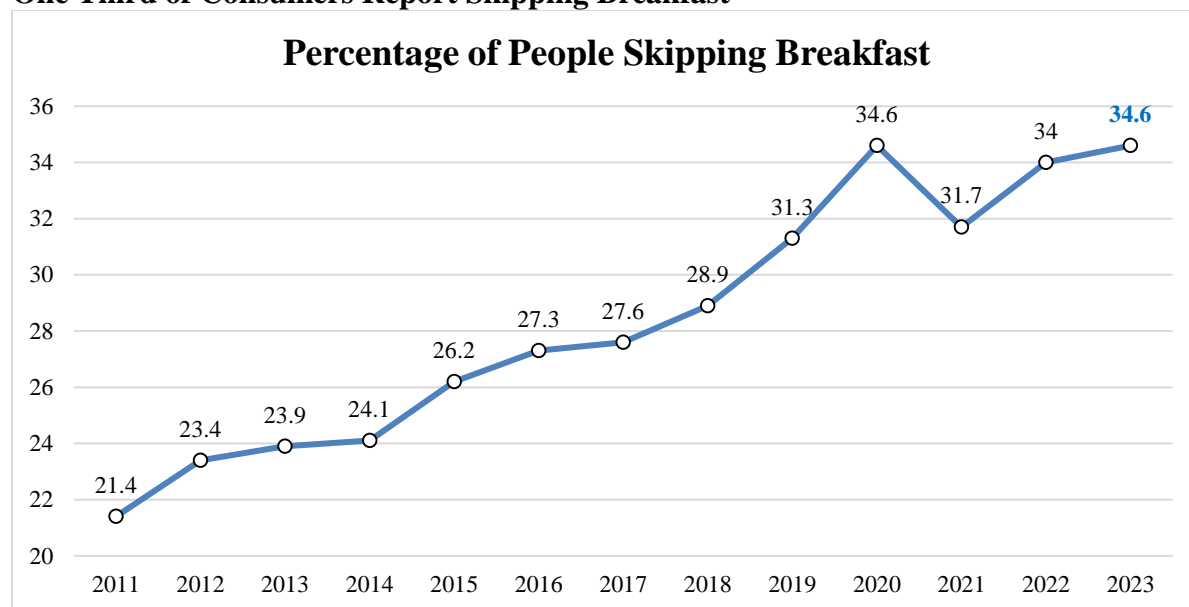


Source: Consumer Behavior Survey Result 2024 by Korea Rural Economic Institute (KREI)

The National Health and Nutrition Survey conducted by the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) showed that the rate of skipping breakfast in 2023 reached 34.6 percent, up from 34 percent in 2022. The 19-29 age group responded that more than half skipped breakfast. To encourage this age group to consume more rice, the government has been supporting a “1,000-Korean-Won (KRW) breakfast” affiliated with local governments. Although the program has had some success, but it has not reversed the overall decline in consumption.

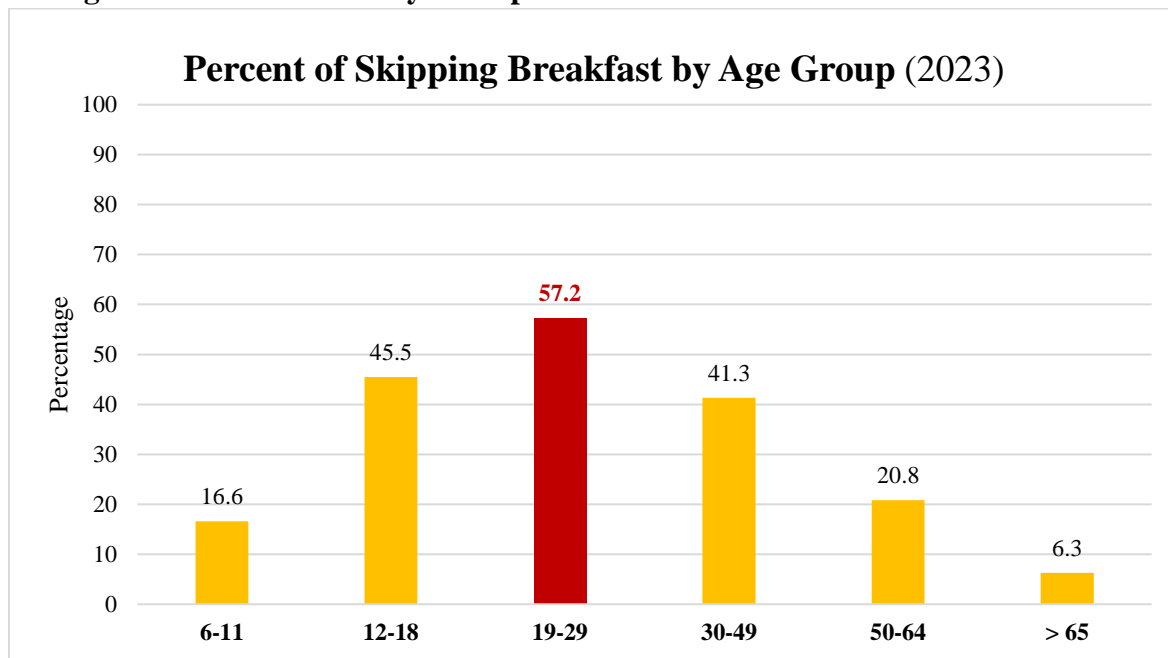
Additionally, in November 2024, the Ministry announced a plan to encourage more use of rice by expanding a liquor tax reduction benefit for local breweries utilizing rice as an ingredient in traditional liquors. This new policy is expected to make more manufacturers eligible for benefits by increasing the production threshold requirements and introducing a new partial tax reduction. Previously, manufacturers could receive a 50 percent tax reduction for certain amounts, and this year’s program will include a partial 30 percent tax reduction for intermediate amounts.

Figure 5
One Third of Consumers Report Skipping Breakfast



Source: The 2023 National Health and Nutrition Survey by Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA)
Note: Recipients responded whether they skipped breakfast as of the prior day of the survey (2014-2021), and since 2022 the question has been changed to whether they skipped breakfast two days ahead of the survey.

Figure 6
Young Adults are Most Likely to Skip Breakfast



Source: The National Health and Nutrition Survey, the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA)

Rice Trade

Imports

In accordance with WTO commitments, Korea imports 408,700 MT of rice annually on a Most Favored Nation (MFN) basis at the current duty level of 5 percent under a tariff rate quota (TRQ) regime implemented in 2015. At the end of 2019, Korea allocated 388,700 MT to country specific quotas (CSQ) within the TRQ for five trading partners (the United States, China, Vietnam, Thailand, and Australia) following negotiations to resolve a WTO dispute on rice tariffication. The remaining 20,000 MT is allocated on an MFN basis and is also available to the five countries with CSQs. Tariffs outside the quota remain prohibitively high at 513 percent.

Korea Fills All 2024 WTO Rice Import Quotas

On December 8, 2024, after the 7th round of rice tenders, Korea awarded all 2024 country specific quota (CSQ) rice import allocations. Out of the 132,304 MT (milled basis) allocated to the United States, 40,000 MT were for table rice, and the rest was filled with brown rice for processing. The Korea Agro-Fisheries and Food Trade Corporation (aT) resumed its table rice weekly auctions on November 4, 2024. However, as of January 2025, only auctions for imported table rice from Vietnam and Thailand have resumed. Weekly auctions for U.S. table rice remain suspended since November 2023.

Table 2
2024 WTO Rice TRQ Contracts Status by Country

2024 WTO Rice TRQ Contracts Status by Country (Metric Ton, Milled Basis, as of December 31, 2024)				
Country	Allocated TRQ	Contracts	Open	Contractual Rate (%)
USA	132,304	132,300	5	100.0
China	157,195	157,195	0	100.0
Vietnam	55,112	55,112	0	100.0
Thailand	28,494	28,495	-1	100.0
Australia	15,595	15,595	0	100.0
MFN	20,000	20,000	0	100.0
Total	408,700	408,696	4	100.0

Source: Korea Agro-Fisheries and Food Trade Corporation (aT); Note: +/- 5 MT of rice is considered rounding error

Table 3
Monthly Delivery Schedule for Rice Contracts under 2024 TRQ

Monthly Delivery Schedule for Rice Contracts under 2024 TRQ (Metric Ton, Milled Basis, As of Final Due of Periods of Arrival)			
Year	Contractual Estimated Time of Arrival (ETA)	Volume of Contracts	from USA
2024	July	1,100	0
	August	5,000	5,000
	September	62,538	44,999
	October	52,899	5,000
	November	31,999	11,999
	December	22,607	0
	2024 Arrivals Subtotal	176,143	66,997
2025	January	5,000	5,000
	February	30,698	15,304
	March	41,500	5,000
	April	31,000	0
	May	49,966	5,000
	June	34,391	10,000
	July	15,000	15,000
	August	0	0
	September	0	0
	October	5,000	0
	November	10,000	10,000
	December	10,000	0
	2025 Arrivals Subtotal	232,553	65,303
Grand Total		408,696	132,300

Source: Korea Agro-Fisheries and Food Trade Corporation (aT)

Exports

Post revised MY 2024/25 exports up by 50,000 MT from the previous report, following the government's pledge to increase international rice aid. The government and rice industry groups are also pursuing strategies to expand commercial export destinations to relieve the burden of oversupply rice in Korea. Potential increases in commercial rice exports are expected to be small. However, demand for rice based K-food products in the global marketplace could boost Korea's domestic use of rice for processed products.

On November 18, 2024, President Yoon stated at the G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, that Korea will significantly expand its support to fighting hunger and poverty in developing countries as a founding member of the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty (GAAHP). Specifically, Yoon announced that Korea will increase rice donations via the World Food Programme (WFP) to 150,000 MT in 2025, up from 100,000 MT in 2024. There has been no detailed information yet about the recipient countries or targeted shipment periods. Total rice donations in 2024 were 110,000 MT, which included both WFP and other programs, notably the ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR).

Many experts expect that the current national rice stock level exceeding 1.0 MMT could carry excessive government expenditures. Therefore, FAS/Seoul has revised the ending stock level in MY 2024/25 down to 979,000 MT.

Rice Exports Reach New Highs, New Markets in 2024

On January 7, 2025, the Minister of MAFRA announced that Korea's overall agricultural and related exports reached a record high of \$9.98 billion in calendar year (CY) 2024, led by surging global demand for instant noodles and processed rice products. K-food exports have been steadily growing for the past nine years, with food product exports increasing by 9 percent from 2023 to 2024. Within the food category, rice product exports grew 38.4 percent year-on-year to \$299.2 million. Total rice exports in 2024 reached 137,000 MT, a significant increase from the previous year's 60,000 MT.

The largest farmers' cooperative association in Korea, the National Agricultural Cooperative Federation (NACF), is leading efforts to create new demand for the oversupplied domestic rice in overseas markets. On November 4, 2024, major and minor Korean news outlets reported that NACF signed a contract with Guangdong Province cooperative in China to export 1,000 MT of milled rice. All quantities were planned to ship within CY 2024, helping to divert some oversupplied rice to overseas markets. Considering most Korean milled rice exports have been destined for food aid purposes rather than commercial exports, it is noteworthy that Korean exporters have successfully developed new markets for commercial sales.

Table 4
Rice Exports by Country

Rice Exports by Country (Metric Ton, Calendar Year, Milled Basis)				
Country	CY2022	CY2023	CY2024	Change (y-o-y)
Kenya	11,000	11,000	21,002	10,002
Turkey	2	9	20,009	20,000
Yemen	18,686	18,000	18,000	-
Bangladesh	1	2	15,001	14,999
Ethiopia	13,000	13,000	13,582	582
Madagascar	0	0	10,002	10,002
Mauritania	0	0	6,720	6,720
Afghanistan	0	2,502	4,896	2,394
Philippines	417	765	4,030	3,265
Mozambique	2	0	3,000	3,000
Myanmar	600	3,250	3,000	-250
Uganda	6,000	2,492	3,000	508
United States	1,820	4,233	2,561	-1,672
Sierra Leone	0	0	2,400	2,400
Guinea-Bissau	0	0	2,400	2,400
Mongolia	109	121	1,891	1,770
Laos	1,314	500	1,500	1,000
China	2	1	1,020	1,019
Canada	338	589	616	27
Australia	371	446	547	101
Others	830	3,895	2,399	-1,496
Total	54,492	60,805	137,576	76,771

Source: Statistics Korea (KOSTAT)

Table 5
Production, Supply and Distribution: Rice

Rice, Milled Market Year Begins Korea, Republic of	2022/2023		2023/2024		2024/2025	
	Nov 2022		Nov 2023		Nov 2024	
	USDA Official	New Post	USDA Official	New Post	USDA Official	New Post
Area Harvested (1000 HA)	727	727	708	708	698	698
Beginning Stocks (1000 MT)	1334	1334	1427	1443	1245	1234
Milled Production (1000 MT)	3764	3764	3702	3702	3585	3585
Rough Production (1000 MT)	4998	4998	4900	4898	4745	4783
Milling Rate (.9999) (1000 MT)	7531	7531	7555	7558	7556	7495
MY Imports (1000 MT)	262	268	395	404	440	440
TY Imports (1000 MT)	251	257	430	422	440	N/A
TY Imp. from U.S. (1000 MT)	38	39	0	196	0	N/A
Total Supply (1000 MT)	5360	5366	5524	5549	5270	5259
MY Exports (1000 MT)	58	58	129	129	125	170
TY Exports (1000 MT)	61	61	130	138	125	N/A
Consumption and Residual(1000 MT)	3875	3865	4150	4186	3950	4110
Ending Stocks (1000 MT)	1427	1443	1245	1234	1195	979
Total Distribution (1000 MT)	5360	5366	5524	5549	5270	5259
Yield (Rough) (MT/HA)	6.8748	6.8748	6.9209	6.9181	6.798	6.8524
(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 Rice, Milled begins in January for all countries. TY 2024/2025 = January 2025 - December 2025						
OFFICIAL DATA CAN BE ACCESSED AT: PSD Online Advanced Query						

Attachments:

No Attachments