

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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GAIN Report Number:

Colombia

Post: Bogota

Colombian Agricultural Production Hit by Strong Rains

Report Categories:

Agricultural Situation

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Report Highlights:

La Niña" climate phenomenon is dumping stronger and longer rains than normal which is impacting Colombian agricultural production and distribution. The government of Colombia has declared the situation of public disaster and would declare state of emergency. The Ministry of Agriculture just announced that 200,000 hectares has been severely affected and the damage will likely increase as rains continues. Corn, cotton, rice, vegetables, livestock and many other agricultural products are being negatively impacted. The Colombian Meteorology Institute (IDEAM) forecast rains to last until the first quarter of 2011.

General Information:

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, 200,000 hectares are under water and the damage will increase as rains continue. The Ministry's preliminary evaluation of the damage shows the following affected areas: rice 34,000 hectares, corn 32,800 hectares, bananas and plantains 9,000, yucca 14,000 hectares, fruit and vegetables 12,000 hectares, coffee 2,000 hectares. The Agricultural Society of Colombia (SAC) estimates that the agricultural sector in Colombia has lost more than USD \$386 million as a result of the intense flooding.

Flooding has also damaged transportation routes and supply chains for agricultural products. Damage to road infrastructure has delayed shipments or made routes longer and more costly. In other cases, producers have decided not to transport produce at all, resulting in lower supplies in some parts of the country.

Food prices have also been affected as a result of flooded land, damaged highways, and poorer quality products. Between November 17-23, prices rose for the following and fruits and vegetables: avocado, banana, blackberries, pineapples, imported fruits, beans, peas, peppers, coli flour, onions, chard, celery, spinach, carrots, and potatoes. In contrast, prices have decreased for several products due to poor quality or oversupply: mangos, papayas, watermelons, beets, eggplants, cabbage, cucumber, and tomatoes.

Dairy production has also been negatively impacted, because feeding pastures are flooded and dairy products spoil over longer transport routes. The livestock association said that 70,000 hectares of pasture have been affected and about 40,000 cattle heads have been lost.

Sugar and ethanol production is operating at 30% capacity, and some plants have gone 10 days without production due to the lack of sugarcane harvesting. As the sugar industry has given priority to sugar supply for local food producers, ethanol production is declining and lower blends are now seen at market.