

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Drought in Romania Lessens Danube River transportation

Report Categories:

Grain and Feed

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Report Highlights:

Lack of precipitation and very high temperatures during June-July continue to challenge Danube River transportation in Romania. Serbia and Hungary grain exports may be affected when their crops are harvested in the near future and the volume intended for water shipment to Constanta Port on the Black Sea is expected to increase.

General Information:

In spite of temporary difficulties that may be encountered, Danube River is one of the most advantageous means of transportation, due to the low costs and large cargo volumes that may be carried from up-stream countries towards Black Sea, such as Serbia and Hungary.

Danube river speed flow at the entry point in Romania was in July about 60 percent of the multi-year average, due to lower rainfall and heat in the countries upstream. According to the forecast issued by the Romanian Hydrologic Institute for the timeframe August – October 2012, the Danube river speed flow at the entrance in Romania will remain under the multi-year average. In mid-August, the Danube river speed was 2,900 cubic meters/second (cm/s) compared to the multi-year average of August of 4,300 cm/s, while for September and October 2012, Danube level is anticipated to remain at 80 percent of the monthly multi-year average given expected normal rainfall in up river feeder countries. The same forecast reveals that the level of domestic rivers flow into Danube is likely to remain at 30-50 percent under their multi-year average, or even lower in some cases given return to normal rainfall patterns in September/October.

On the Romanian territory, lack of rainfall and high temperatures resulted in low water depths recorded in certain segments of the Danube river (under 2 meters), making barges, and ships flowing with difficulty. Dredging the river is required in order to improve its usage for commodities transportation, as often vessels fail in the sandy thresholds. In order to reduce the risk of blockage, pulling equipment has to maneuver fewer barges than normal, with a direct effect on the time allocated for transportation. In an effort to improve the navigation conditions, the Romanian Government recently allocated additional funds for dredging the river in the most critical spots (approximately USD 850,000).

Normally, during this time of the year, grains traffic on the Danube River is not that intense, thus grains shipments are only slightly impacted. Currently, the only constraint grains traders may need to consider is the additional amount of time needed for transit, due to the maneuvering process in certain locations to move full barges downriver. Nevertheless, in September-October when spring grains (mainly corn) become available for export from the neighboring countries (Serbia and Hungary, in addition to Romania) barge traffic is expected to intensify, posing an additional risk in river sailing even for barges partially filled to correct for lower water flow.

Concerning the grains transit through Constantza Port, the major gate for goods intended for export originating from the above-mentioned countries, it is worth mentioning that during the first semester of 2012, grains held a share of 27 percent in the total goods transiting that port. According to the data provided by the port administration, about 6.4 million MT of grains transited Constantza port during January-June 2012 compared to 3.5 million MT in the respective timeframe of the previous year. Regional bumper crops in the fall of 2011 and improvement in Danube transportation conditions during the first trimester of this year played a role in registering this remarkable share increase in 2012.

Related reports: [Low Danube level impedes regional grains trade](#)