



# Wheat - Overview

## Importance of wheat in Afghanistan

Wheat (Figure 1) is a culturally significant crop in Afghanistan and a staple food for all Afghans. Wheat is cultivated in every province (Figure 2); primarily for self consumption. Wheat dominates the estimated 2.7 to 3 million hectares planted to cereals with barley, maize, and rice being the other important cereals.

Wheat figures for 2012:

	Irrigated	Rainfed
Area (m ha)	1.2	1.3
Yield (t/ha)	3.0	1.1
Production (m t)	3.5	1.5

From Agriculture prospects reports, MAIL May 2012.



Figure 1. Wheat in Bamyan (Source: <http://www.zimbio.com>)

## Overview of the wheat production

- **Planting seasons.** About 90% of wheat is fall-planted and the rest is spring-planted.
- **Water management.** About 80% of the wheat produced is from irrigated lands, with only about 20% from rainfed areas.
- **Seeding rates.** Seeding rates range between 110-175 kg/ha (22-35 kg/jerib) for irrigated wheat, and 80-100 kg/ha (16-20 kg/jerib) for rainfed wheat.
- **Harvest.** It is mostly done by hand (Figure 1). Only about 20% of farmers have access to mechanical threshing.
- **Grain versus straw.** Grain and straw have equal value. Although wheat straw has a relatively low nutritive value, it is used as livestock feed. If a farmer runs out of fodder in the winter, animal feed is very hard to find. It has been suggested that farmers use high seeding rates to produce more straw.

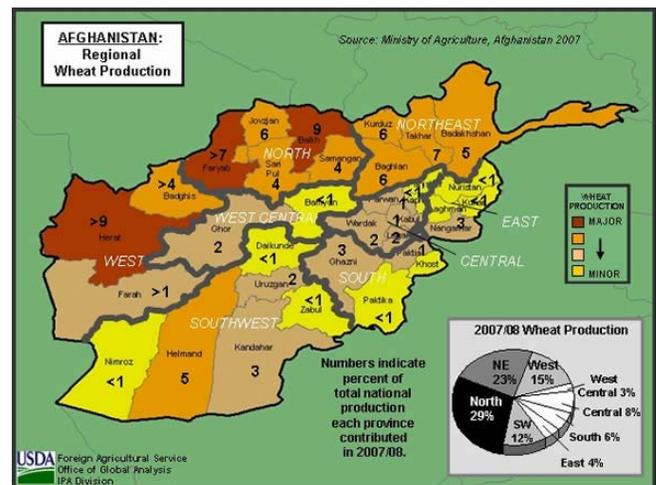


Figure 2. Wheat production in general is concentrated in the Northern provinces (Source: USDA and MAIL, 2007)

## Wheat production problems

Rainfall has a significant effect on wheat production in Afghanistan because much of the irrigation water is drawn directly from rivers. In dry years, there is less water for irrigation. The lack of irrigation infrastructure in almost all the provinces makes it difficult for farmers to grow crops in drought years. Land preparation, seed quality, seeding methods and irrigation are often problematic.

Prepared by Hussain Sharifi and Mark Bell © 2012.

**Reference:** Agriculture prospects report, MAIL <http://mail.gov.af/en/page/3489>; ICARDA Wheat Production [http://www.icarda.org/afghanistan/NA/Full/Primary\\_F.htm#SEASON](http://www.icarda.org/afghanistan/NA/Full/Primary_F.htm#SEASON); Review of the Wheat Seed Sector in Afghanistan: Implications for seed programming and regulatory frameworks, Raphy Favre, 2004, AIZON <http://www.aizon.org/Review%20of%20the%20Seed%20Sector%20in%20Afghanistan.pdf>

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