



AS IT IS

Zimbabwe Expecting Largest Ever Wheat Harvest

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The African nation of Zimbabwe said it is close to reaching its largest-ever wheat harvest.

The country's agricultural leaders say the harvest should produce 380,000 tonnes, an 80,000-tonne increase from 2021. The amount is also 20,000 more tonnes than the nation requires, which would leave a small supply for future use.

Zimbabwe began to farm wheat in 1962.

Agriculture deputy minister Vangelis Haritatos spoke with the Associated Press by telephone.

"A lot of countries are facing shortages, but the opposite is happening in Zimbabwe," he said.

However, wildfires and expected rains remain a threat to crops yet to be harvested.

The war in Ukraine has hurt many African nations who depend on wheat imports from that country and its invader, Russia. A United Nations report says African nations import 44 percent of their grain from Russia and Ukraine.

Zimbabwe's President Emmerson Mnangagwa has described the war as a "wake-up call."

The country's agriculture ministry went to work. Haritatos said Zimbabwe asked hundreds of small farm owners to work together to start growing wheat. The government then worked to improve water availability and provide fertilizer for the farmers.

Wheat has taken over some of the farmland normally used for winter corn. Zimbabwe believes it has enough corn stored to help with any future shortages.

The country wants to see 100,000 hectares of farmland growing wheat next season, a 25 percent increase.

Haritatos said Zimbabwe's success in growing wheat this year came because of the small farms. He said many countries do not believe that operators of small farms can add much to overall production.

"We organized them into **clusters** and convinced them it was possible," he said, adding that the war made Zimbabwe "realize that we shouldn't **rely** on other countries for food we can grow on our own."

While the country is celebrating the upcoming harvest, which runs through December, there are still concerns.

Farmers are worried about damage that could come from heavy rains expected soon. Until then, the dry weather creates the threat of fires. Fires destroyed about \$1 million worth of wheat in just one week earlier this month.

In an effort to get the wheat harvested faster, the government is deploying harvesting machines called combines to farmers.

I'm Dan Friedell.

Dan Friedell adapted this story for VOA Learning English based on a report by the Associated Press.

Words in This Story

cluster -n. a group of things that are close together

rely -v. to need someone or something else for support

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