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The rice situation in the South and East Mediterranean

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According to FAO data (1992), rice covers an area of approximately 2,259,000 ha around the Mediterranean, the total production being 11,088,000 tons and the average yield 4.9 tons/ha.

Taking into account American and Australian rice production under Mediterranean climate areas, the total rice production is estimated at approximately 15 million tons, i.e. about one quarter of the Japonica rice production, the latter representing 12% of the world production.

Table 1. Rice in Mediterranean climate countries: area under cultivation, yield and production

	Area (,000 ha)	Yield (t/ha)	Production (,000 t)
I – Mediterranean belt	2 259	4.9	11 088
North Mediterranean	1 067	4.2	4 508
<i>European Union</i>	364	5.9	2 148
France	24	5.2	124
Greece	14	6.8	95
Italy	216	5.6	1 216
Portugal	27	5.8	155
Spain	83	6.7	558
<i>Countries of the eastern bloc</i>	653	3.3	2 145
Albania	2	2.6	5
Bulgaria	8	2.4	20
Hungary	6	2.5	5
Rumania	16	2.4	39
Ex-Yougoslavia	16	3.7	60
Ex-USSR	605	3.3	2 006
<i>Turkey</i>	50	4.1	215
South Mediterranean	517	7.6	3 930
Egypt	510	7.7	3 908
Morocco	7	3.1	22
<i>Near and Middle East</i>	675	3.9	2 650
Iran	600	4.2	2 500
Iraq	75	2.0	150
II – America			
USA (California)*	(330)	(9)	(2 970)
Chile	32	3.9	134
III – Australia	128	8.8	1 128
Total Mediterranean rice	(2 877)	(5.3)	(15 370)
Total Japonica rice	10 911	5.8	63 544

Source: FAO Production Yearbook, 1992.

* USDA

Table 1 shows an important yield dispersion. The best results are obtained in California, Australia and Egypt. Consequently, there remains an important margin for progress in the other countries.

Table 2. Trends in production, foreign trade and consumption of rice in the Mediterranean region

	Production (,000 t)		Net foreign trade (,000 t)		Consumption (,000 t)	Total population (,000)	Per capita consumption (kg)
	Paddy	Usiné	Imports	Exports			
North Mediterranean							
<i>European Union (*)</i>							
1966-69	1 444	940		160	780	153 300	5.1
1986-89	1 965	1 280		250	1 030	172 430	6.0
1992	2 148	1 396					
<i>Countries of the eastern bloc</i>							
1966-69	1 122	730	397		1 127	295 240	3.8
1986-89	3 012	1 958	417	-	2 375	349 560	6.8
1992	2 110	1 370					
South Mediterranean							
1966-69	2 316	1 505		596	909	65 000	14.0
1986-89	2 353	1 530	70		1 600	107 000	15.0
1992	3 930	2 554					
Near & Middle East (**)							
1966-69	1 583	1 030	335		1 364	70 890	19.24
1986-89	1 860	1 210	2 810		4 020	142 440	28.2
1992	2 865	1 862					
Total							
1966-69	6 465	4 205		24	4 180	584 430	7.15
1986-89	9 190	5 978	3 047		9 025	771 430	11.69
1992	11 053	7 184					

(*) Pays producteurs; (**) Turkey included.

Sources: Population, production (FAO); Foreign trade (USDA).

In *Table 2*, FAO production and population data and USDA data for foreign trade, show the big changes having occurred in the Mediterranean region.

The outstanding fact is a considerable per capita rice consumption per year, rising from 7.15 kg to 11.69 kg from 1966–69 to 1986–89. Production alone would have allowed a consumption of only 7.5 kg in 1986–1987. The Mediterranean region which was self-sufficient in 1966–1969 has become an important market with 3 to 4 tons of rice, representing one quarter of the rice world market.

Rice consumption has been increasing, at different levels, in all the sub-regions. It has been diminishing or simply stagnating in very few countries. The most noteworthy rise in consumption is the consequence of the oil boom in the countries of the Middle-East.

At production level, there have been three main crises: i) in Egypt, production stagnation up to 1987, (ii) in Iran and Irak subsequent to the war between the two countries, (iii) and recently in countries of the eastern bloc; the data on the evolution of production in the first column of *Table 2* is from this point of view very significant. Three types of production revival can also be characterized: in Iran-Irak due to the renewal of the activity, after the war; in Europe due to the effects of the EEC; in Egypt, due to the effects of the structural adjustment policy, accompanied, more than in any other country, by important research efforts.