

Foreign Agricultural Service

Global Market Analysis

International Production Assessment Division

Web: <https://ipad.fas.usda.gov>

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Commodity Intelligence Report

Argentina Crop Travel: Crop Conditions and the Impacts of the Leafhopper Insect on MY 24/25 Planting Decisions

Crop analysts from FAS Washington and FAS Buenos Aires (FAS staff who cover Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay) traveled throughout southern Argentina in September 2024 (see figure 1) to observe the wheat and barley crops and summer crop planting expectations. The three largest crops grown in Argentina are soybeans, corn, and wheat (see figure 2). Argentina is the 3rd largest producer of soybeans (5th largest exporter), the 5th largest producer of corn (3rd largest exporter), and the 12th largest producer of wheat (7th largest exporter). Argentina also grows other crops such as barley, sunflowers, sorghum, cotton, peanuts, rice, oats, rye, rapeseed, and millet.

Corn is traditionally the largest crop produced. Production for marketing year (MY) 2024/25, however, matches soybeans production, with 51.0 million metric tons (mmt) forecast, on an area of 6.4 million hectares (mha). Last year, Argentina suffered from corn stunt disease (caused by the leafhopper insect, or *chicharrita*), which decreased corn potential. This year's forecast is up 2 percent from last year's crop of 50.0 mmt, from an area of 7.0 mha. Argentina grows either early or late-planted corn. Over the last twenty years, most corn is planted late, which moves the critical development phase past the traditionally dry and hot January.

Soybeans are the next largest crop produced, with 51.0 mmt forecast for MY 2024/25, on an area of 16.9 mha. This year's forecast is up 6 percent from last year's crop of 48.2 mmt, from an area of 16.37 mha. Soybeans in Argentina are grown as first or second soybeans. The name indicates if the soybeans are planted on the same field after the winter crop harvest (second soybeans) or not (first soybeans). First soybeans are typically higher yielding since they have a longer growing season and have been planted in soils not leached of nutrients and soil moisture by the winter crop. Soybeans are planted from November through January and harvested in April through June (see figure 3 for the planting and harvest calendar for all crops).

Wheat is the third largest crop produced, with 17.5 mmt forecast for MY 2024/25, on an area of 6.0 mha. This year's forecast is up 10 percent from last year's crop of 15.85 mmt, from an area of 5.6 mha. Wheat is planted from May through July and harvested in November through January.

Crop Conditions:

In September 2024, FAS analysts traveled throughout southern Argentina to observe the wheat and barley crops during the early stage of development. Barley is mainly grown in Buenos Aires province (about 93 percent of production; see figure 4). Most farmers attempt to grow malt barley because it gets a better price over feed barley. The idea is to strive for malting quality but if quality suffers during the growing season, farmers can still sell the crop as feed barley. There have been minimal losses for barley over winter in Buenos Aires province, so unless there are issues during harvest, a normal level of abandonment is expected. Crop conditions are average to above-average due to favorable early season growing conditions, which has helped bolster the crop even as dryness throughout October has occurred. The average to above-average conditions were seen through on-the-ground assessments (see figure 5) and the satellite derived Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) (see figure 6).

Wheat is grown in Buenos Aires province (about 50 percent of production), Santa Fe (18 percent) and Córdoba (13 percent) (see figure 7). Wheat conditions in Buenos Aires early in the season were favorable due to good weather (see figure 8), but wheat has recently been impacted by dryness in Buenos Aires, Córdoba and Santa Fe, so overall conditions in the country are mixed (see figure 9a and 9b). Producers have in the past insured their crops against hail but are now beginning to insure crops against frost too. The insurance can be expensive because when frost occurs, the impacts are usually over a larger area than hail. Additionally, industry contacts stated that HB4 wheat, which is a drought tolerant wheat, has been approved for production in Argentina. Farmers were generally excited about the new technology and expect the crop to be widely adopted, but some grain marketers are concerned about genetically modified crops in markets important to Argentina.

In the southern regions of Buenos Aires, there is significant growth in corn area because of the use of lower plant density, which means a lower yielding crop but also less inputs, so farmers still profit from the crop. Corn area in this region is growing because farmers can decide whether to export or sell to feedlots.

Expectations for the Summer Crops in MY 24/25:

Expectations for the coming marketing year for the summer crops are for less corn, and more soybeans, cotton, sorghum and sunflower area. Argentine farmers we spoke with had conducted farm visits to Brazil to learn how to deal with the leafhopper insect because the bug is also common in Brazil but better managed. Many sources are assuming continued issues with leafhoppers this coming year, which is causing farmers to make unusual changes to their crop rotations. Prior to the beginning of the planting season, many farmers indicated that they wanted to plant higher-than-normal sunflowers because of the good prices but there ultimately was not enough seed available and conditions were dry during planting. Sunflower planting is about half complete (see figure 10) and even though area is up year-to-year, farmers would have planted even more if seed

availability and weather had cooperated. Local industry sources noted that, due to the leafhopper and continued impacts, corn area in MY 2024/25 is expected to drop almost half in the north, a quarter in the middle part of the country, and around 10 percent in the south, which generally tracks the damage incurred during MY 2023/24.

Transportation and Infrastructure:

In Argentina, much of the agricultural goods are exported through the Port of Rosario, along the Paraná River. Due to low water levels in the Paraná River over the last few years, large vessels stop at the Bahia Blanca Port in the southern part of Buenos Aires province to top up the ships. There have traditionally been large backlogs at the Port in Bahia Blanca. Farmers now take a virtual number and then when their number is called, they have a window of time to get the crops to the port. While on September's crop travel, FAS observed many farmers holding corn in the fields until their allocated export time window, at which point the crop would be harvested and shipped to the port.

Contributions to this report by the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service's Office in Buenos Aires and the assistance from Global Market Analysis colleagues in FAS Washington are gratefully acknowledged.



Figure 1. Argentina Crop Trip Route in mid-September 2024. Source: USDA FAS

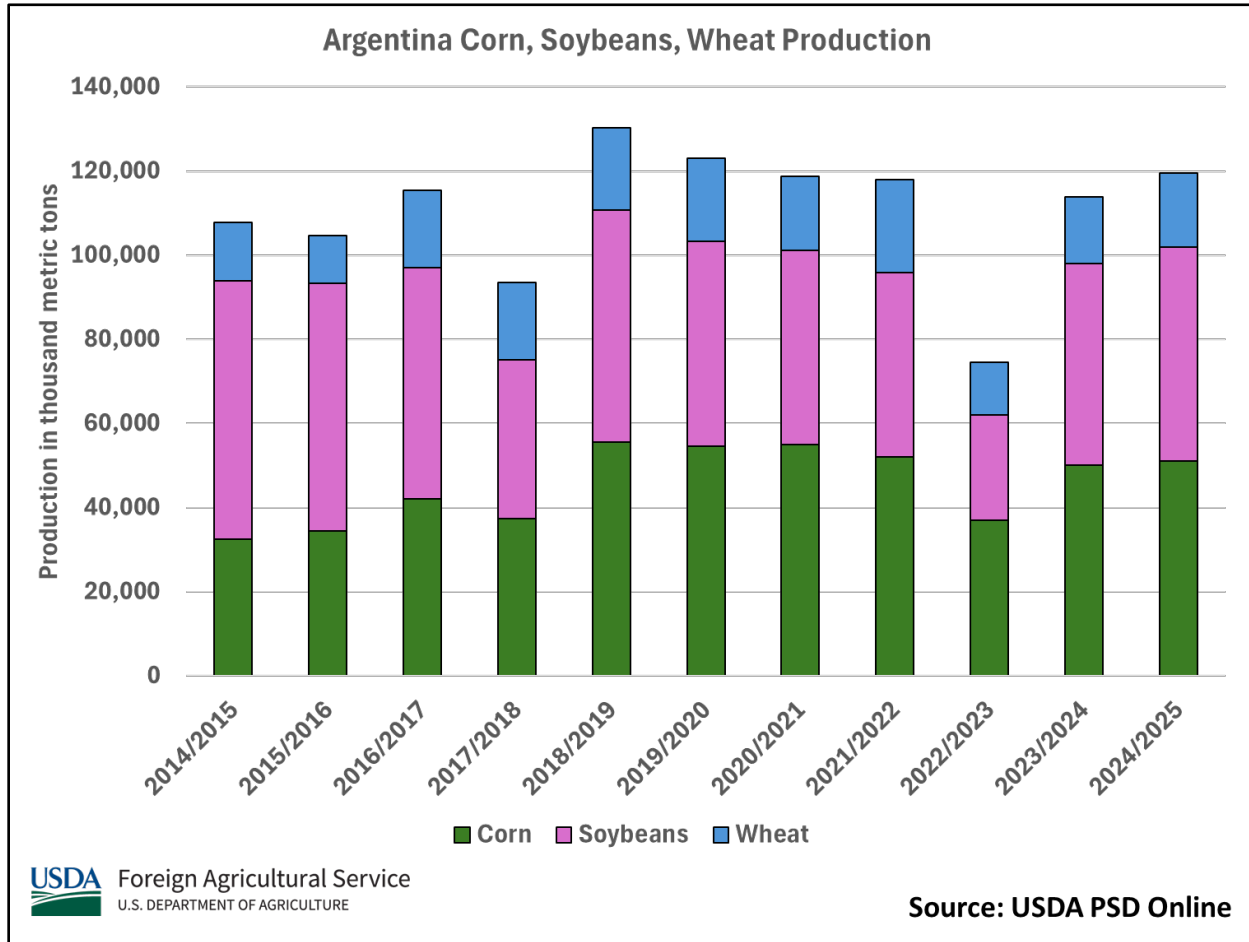


Figure 2. Argentina Crop Production for Soybeans, Corn and Wheat. Source: USDA FAS Production, Supply, and Distribution Database

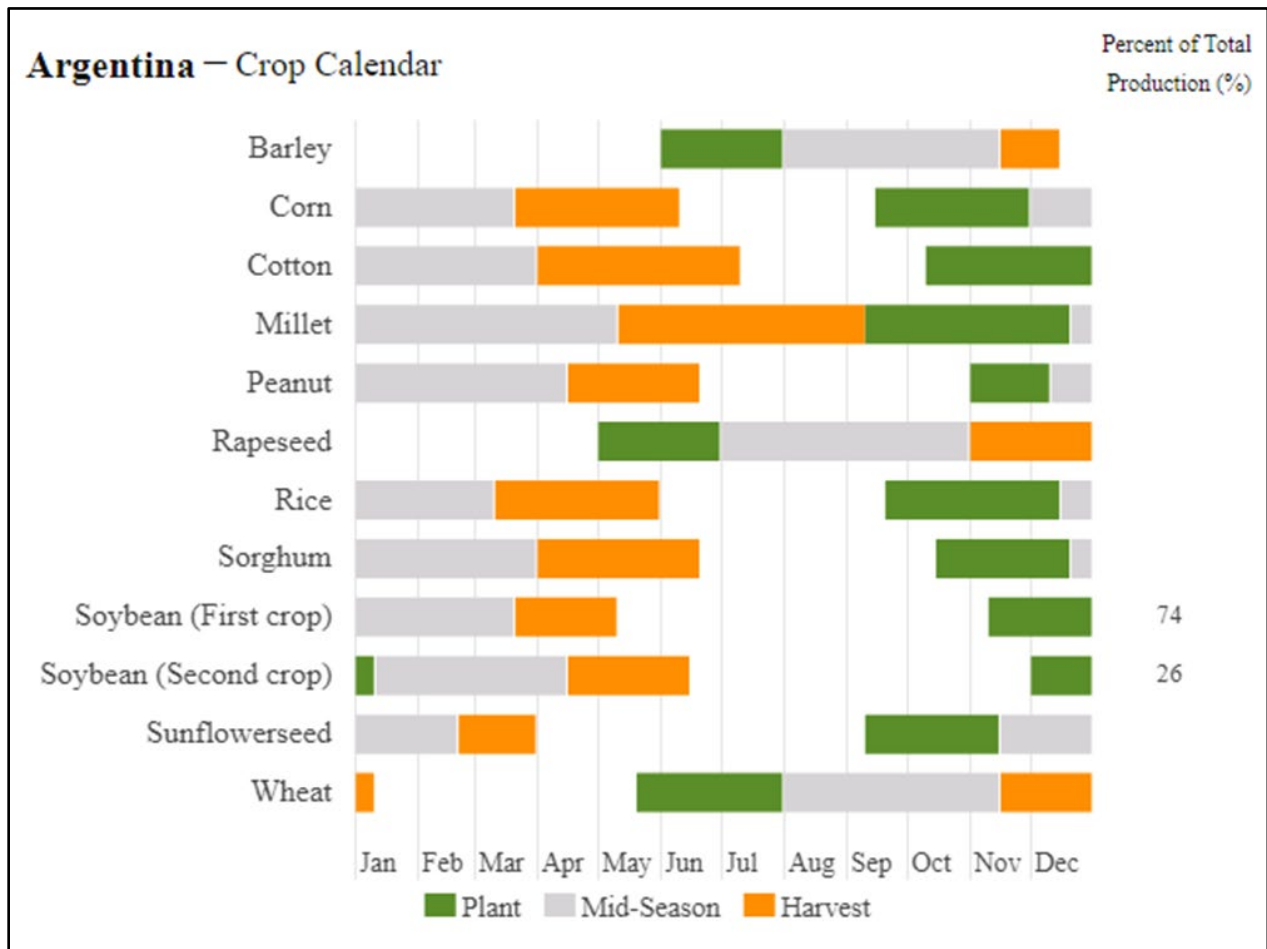
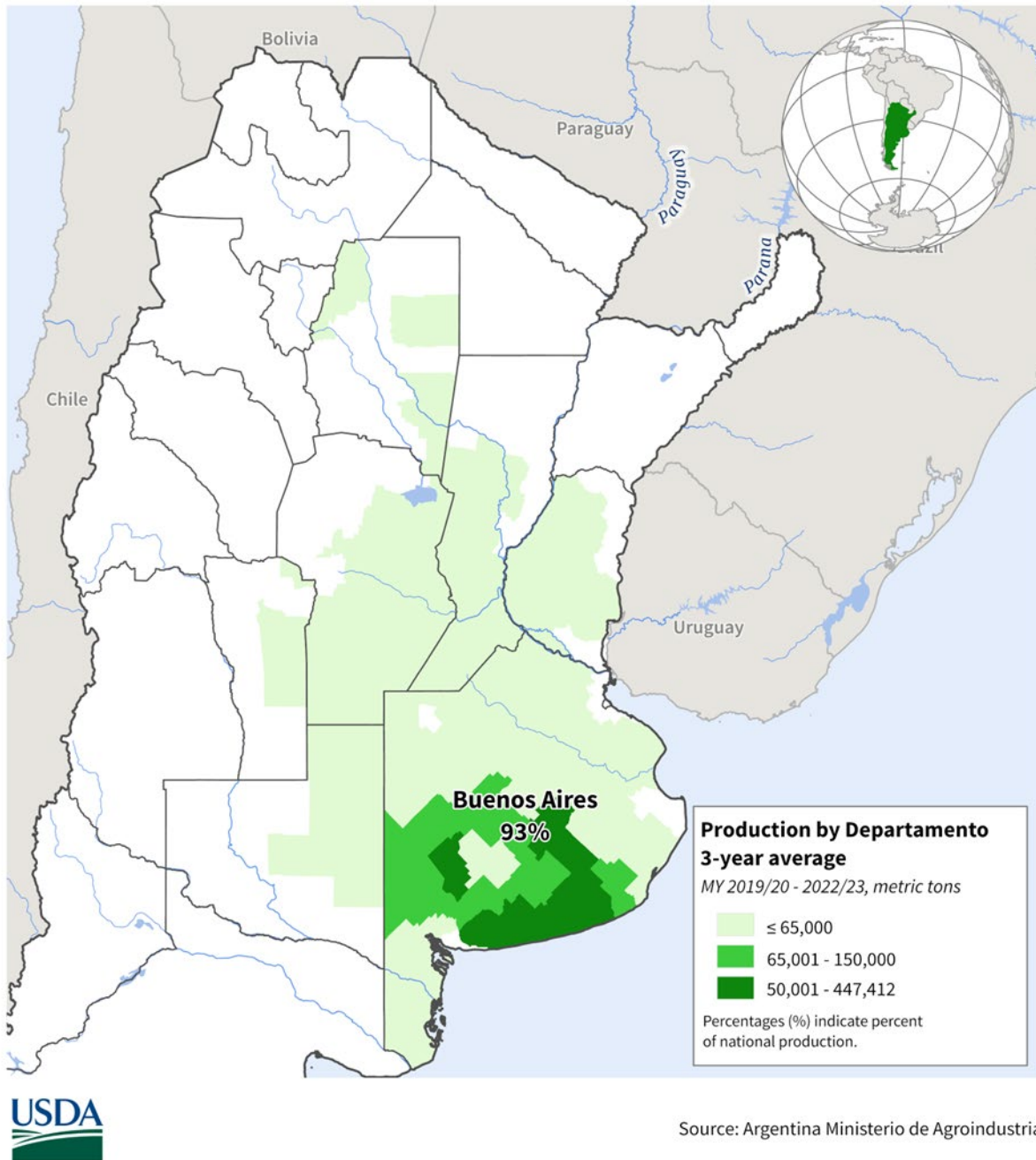


Figure 3. Argentina Crop Calendar

Argentina: Barley Production



Source: Argentina Ministerio de Agroindustria

Figure 4. Argentina Barley Crop Production Map, Source: Argentina Ministry of Agriculture

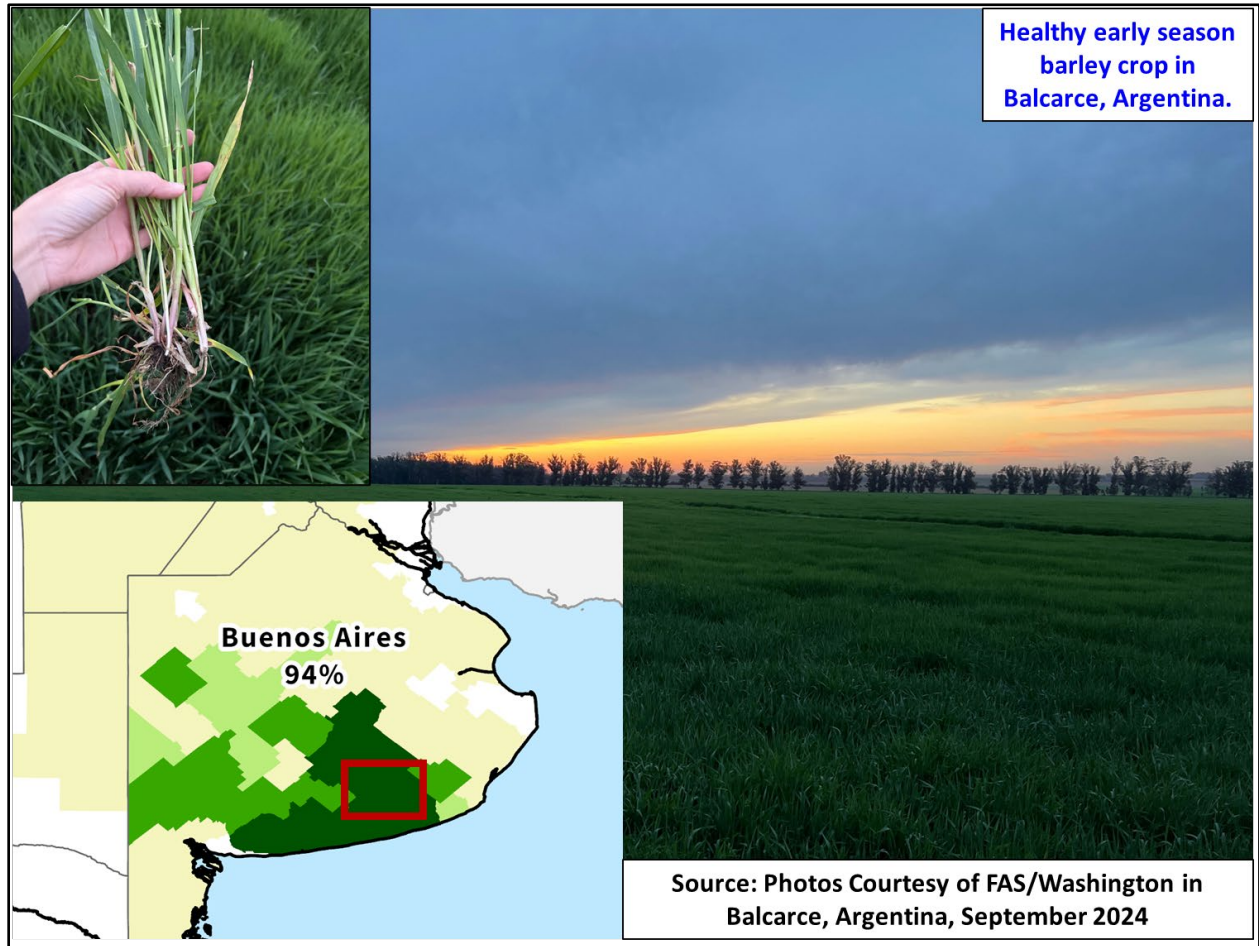


Figure 5. Barley Crop in Balcarce Argentina in September 2024. Source: USDA FAS

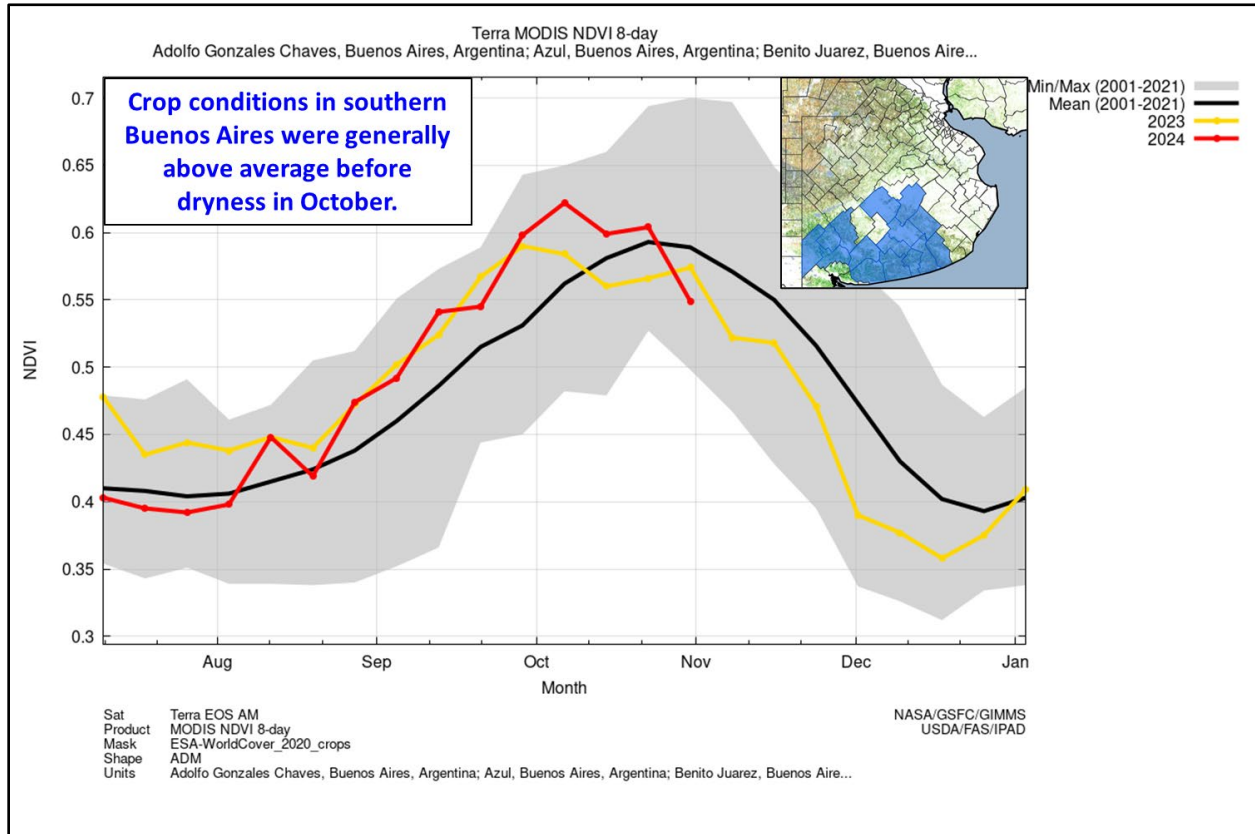


Figure 6. Satellite Derived Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) displays above average growing conditions for the major barley growing regions. Source: USDA-NASA Global Agricultural Monitoring

Argentina: Wheat Production

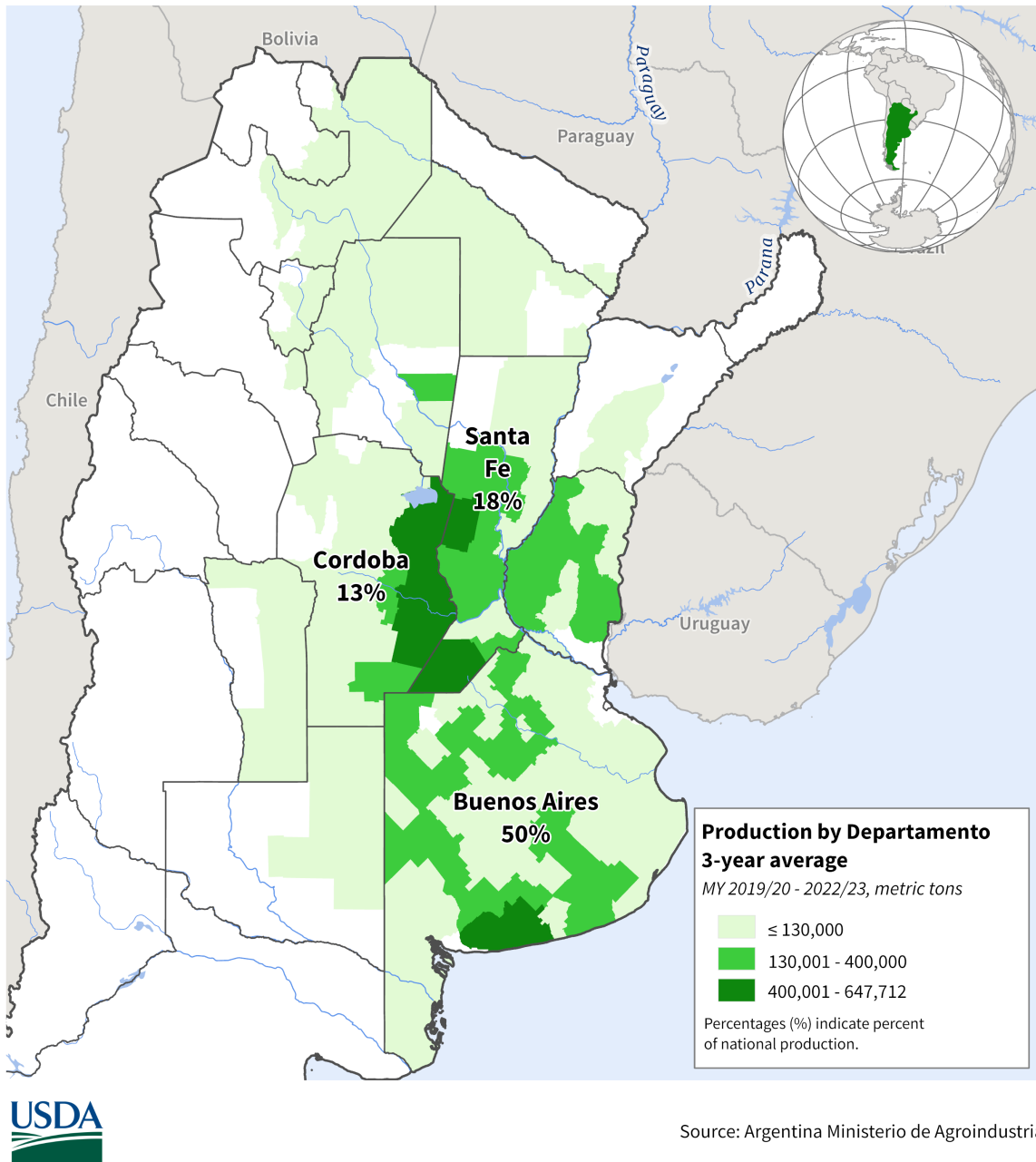


Figure 7. Argentina Wheat Crop Production Map, Source: Argentina Ministry of Agriculture



Figure 8. Favorable early season conditions for wheat in Bahia Blanca, Argentina in mid-September. Source USDA FAS

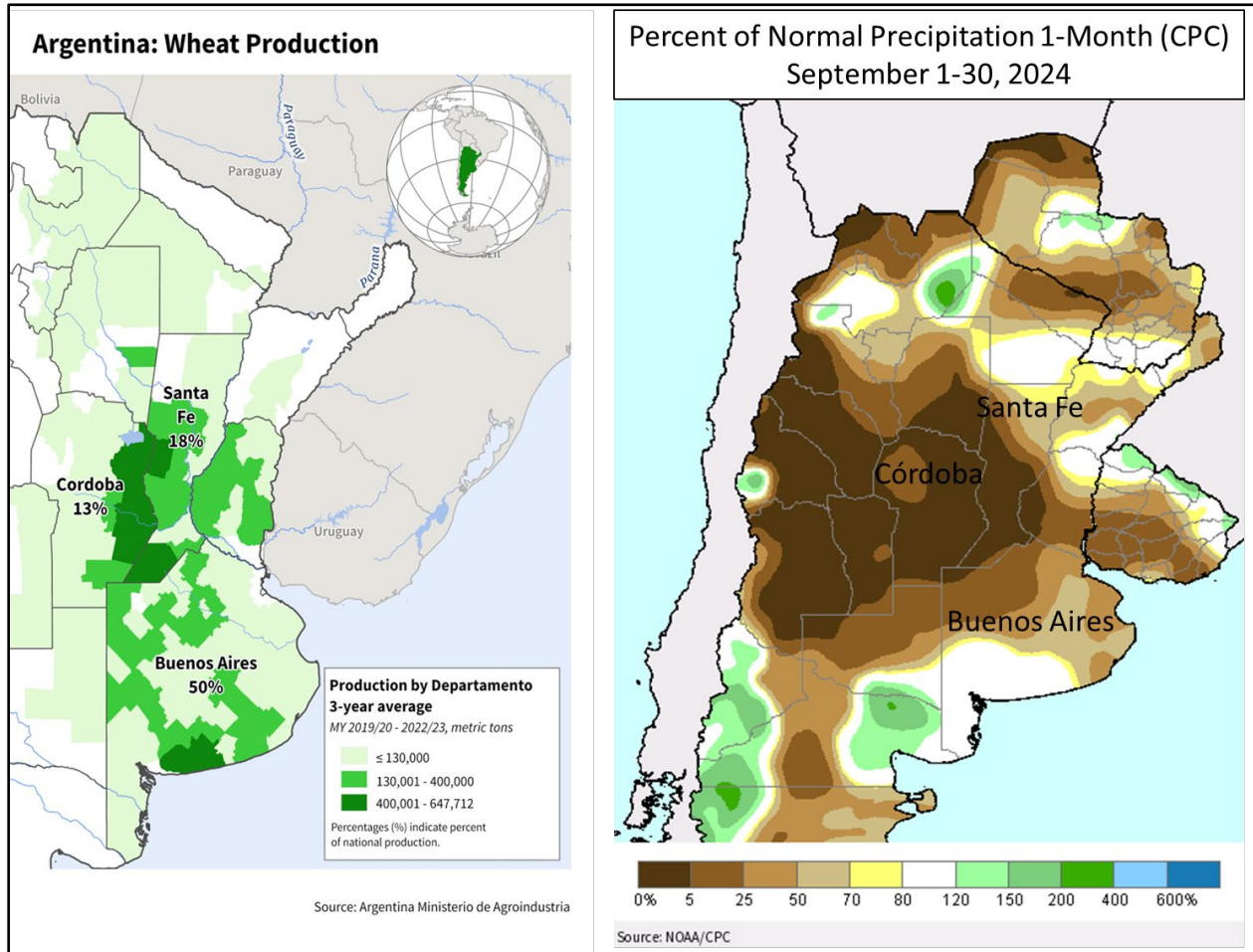


Figure 9a. Conditions are mixed for wheat in Argentina due to sporadic rainfall throughout the country. Source: NOAA/CPC

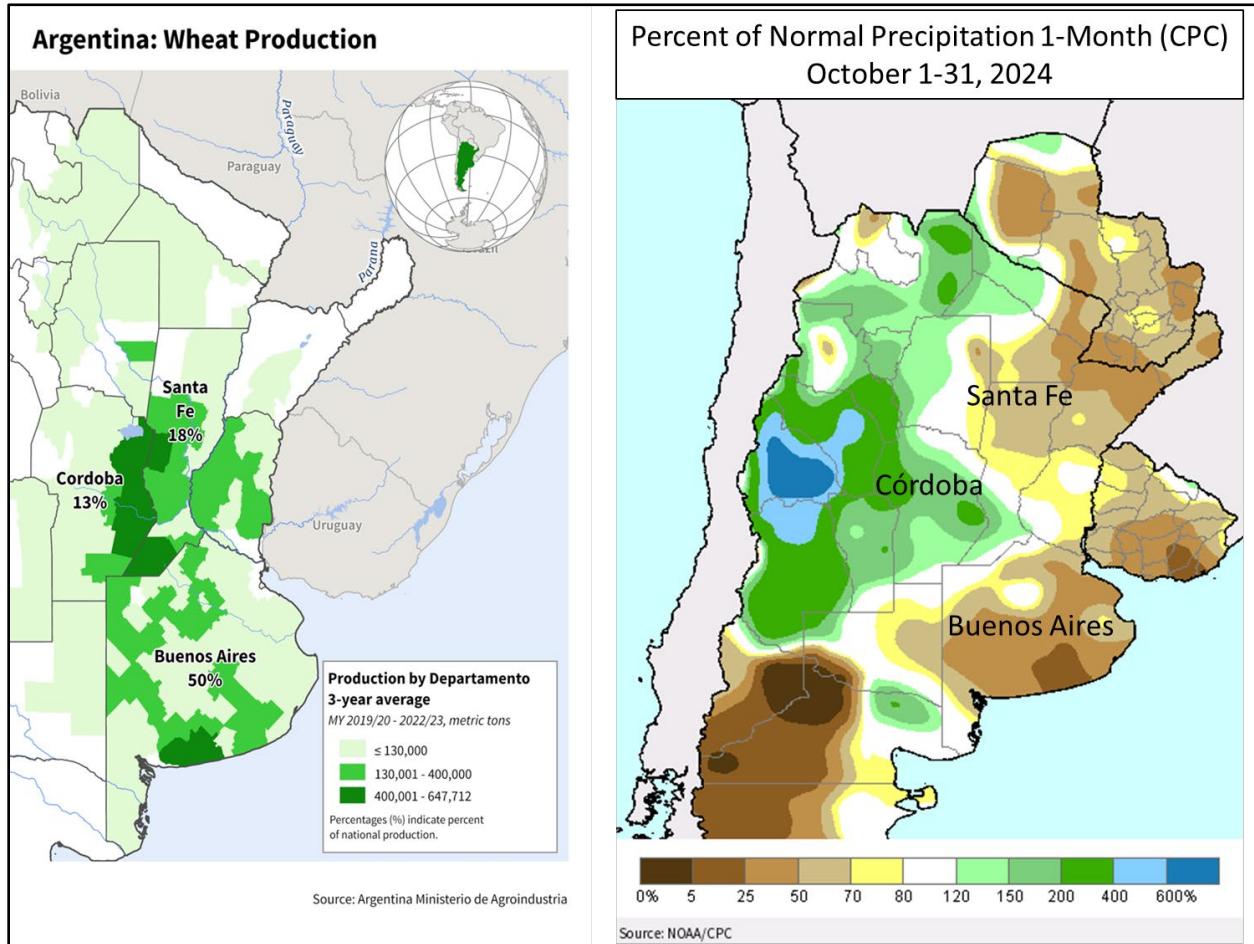


Figure 9b. Conditions are mixed for wheat in Argentina due to sporadic rainfall throughout the country. Source: NOAA/CPC

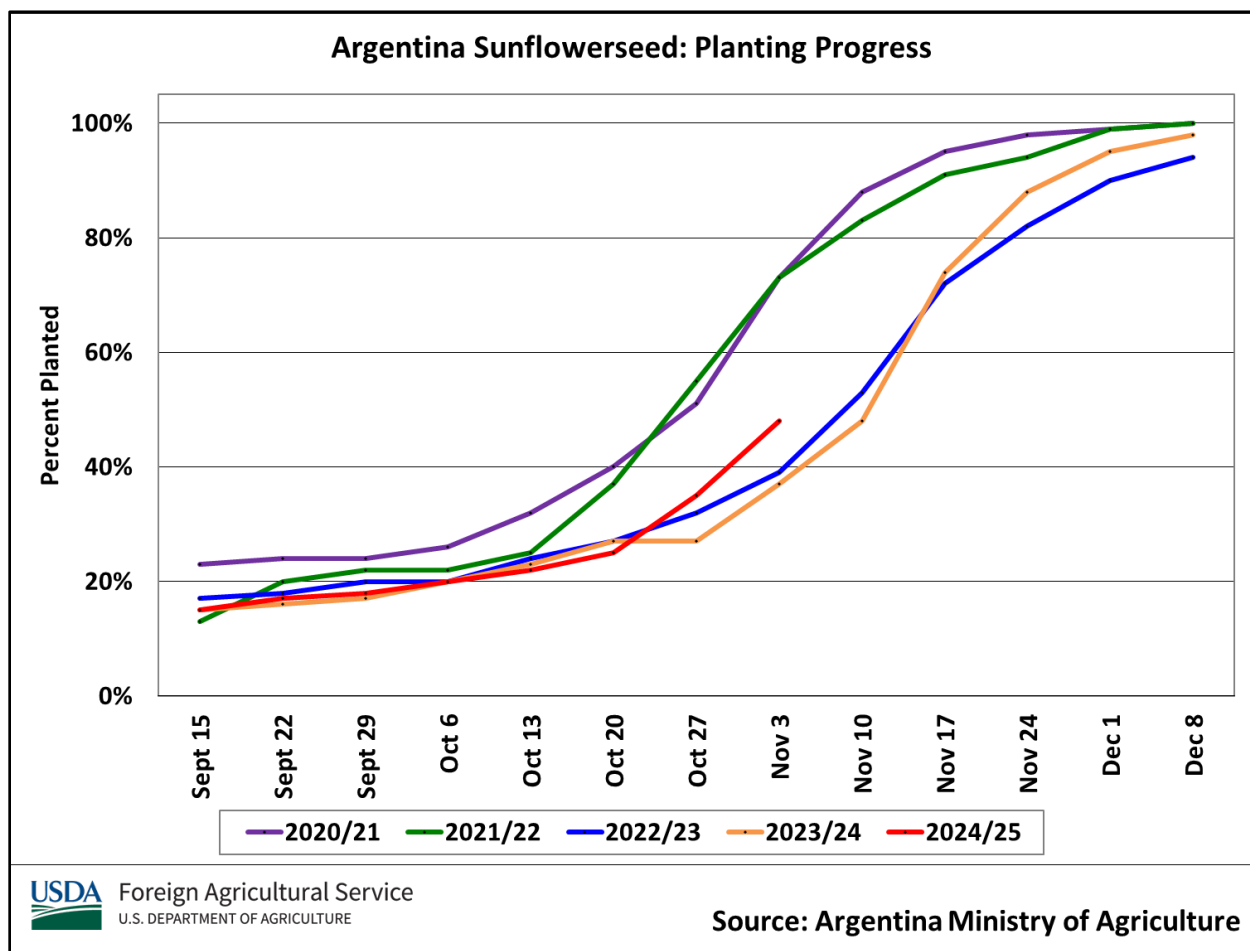


Figure 10. Sunflower Planting Progress, Source: Argentina Ministry of Agriculture

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