USDA Foreign Agricultural Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Global Market Analysis
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Commodity Intelligence Report

Colombia Rice: Record Production in Marketing Year 2024/25

Colombia production for rice and corn is rather limited due to the diversity of agricultural production in the country and a focus on producing other high-value commodities. Colombia is ranked as the 44th largest corn producer and the 26th largest rice producer in the world. Colombia is important to American agriculture, however, because when Colombia needs to import either of the major grain crops (rice or corn), they typically turn to the United States to fill the demand. Based on information from USDA's Production, Supply, and Distribution database, Colombia, on average (marketing year (MY) 2019/20-MY 2023/24), imports about 60 percent of their rice imports and 70 percent of their corn imports from the United States. Therefore, accurately understanding the production for Colombia is important for U.S. producers, even though Colombia is a relatively small producer in the world ranking.

FAS/Washington and FAS/Bogota analysts went on crop assessment travel throughout the major rice growing province of Tolima in Colombia during late February 2025 (see figure 1). Tolima is the largest producer province of rice, followed by Huila, and Norte de Santander (see figure 2). In Colombia, rice can be grown year around, but over half of the rice grown is between July and December. Farmers either directly plant seeds or transplant rice, but which practice is chosen depends on available machinery and weather conditions. Rice is mostly irrigated, but there are also rainfed fields, especially on the Eastern Plains. Traditionally, farmers have used flood irrigation, but now farmers are doing more practices that save water because of increasing water scarcity over the last few years. In several farms in Tolima, farmers have begun using plastic water bag pipes to do a better job of releasing or holding water (see figure 3). These bags are easier to direct the water and do alternative wetting and drying (AWD) techniques instead of fully flooding the fields. Tolima is one of the more productive regions, but there is a deficit of water leading to arguments between the rural and urban sectors over water rights. Therefore, the adoption of water saving practices will assist farmers' water costs in the long term. In Colombia, farmers typically do not have access to storage facilities or dryers, so the crops are usually sold right after harvest.

As in other countries, there are concerns over land ownership and titling in parts of Colombia. This makes investment in the land difficult and will need to eventually be resolved (see figure 4). Industry groups believe there is an opportunity to increase corn production for the poultry industry, but issues over land ownership and infrastructure are two challenges that will need to be addressed. Additionally, some small initiatives into soybean production began in 2020 over concerns with food security. Soybean production

is still relatively small, but the Eastern Plains is an area where there is the most potential for expansion (at the expense of livestock in the region).

Other future concerns over agricultural production in Colombia include weather, which is becoming more volatile, and stronger El Niño/la Niña events which can impact yield. In Colombia, El Niño means decreased precipitation and hotter weather. El Niño events also mean higher nighttime temperatures, which reduces yield potential. There are some crop varieties that can absorb a one or two Celsius degree increase in temperature, but higher temperature increases will lead to decreases in yield. A La Niña event means cloudy and cooler weather and increased precipitation. Currently, there are also concerns over increasing water scarcity as cities grow and disagreements over urban/rural water rights continue.

Crop Conditions:

Rice production for MY 2024/25 is estimated at 2.048 million metric tons (mmt, milled basis), up 10 percent from the previous marketing year. This year-to-year increase is due to a higher planted area and favorable weather throughout the growing season. Corn planting had just begun during the FAS visit in February, and corn production for MY 2024/25 is estimated at 1.5 mmt, a decrease from 1.6 mmt in MY 2023/24 due to a lower area. In February 2025, when FAS/Washington and FAS/Bogota traveled in Tolima (where about half of total rice production is grown), above normal precipitation had occurred in the preceding months. The rice crop, therefore, was looking healthy and the crop stage ranged from just planted to flowering (see figure 5). FAS/Washington collected field data during the trip to support area estimation work in low data regions. Using methods learned from previous Panama dryland rice mapping, the goal is to better map rice area in Colombia. This work is especially important in years such as MY 2024/25, when harvested area jumped 10 percent from the previous year.

Colombia 2025 Crop Travel Route

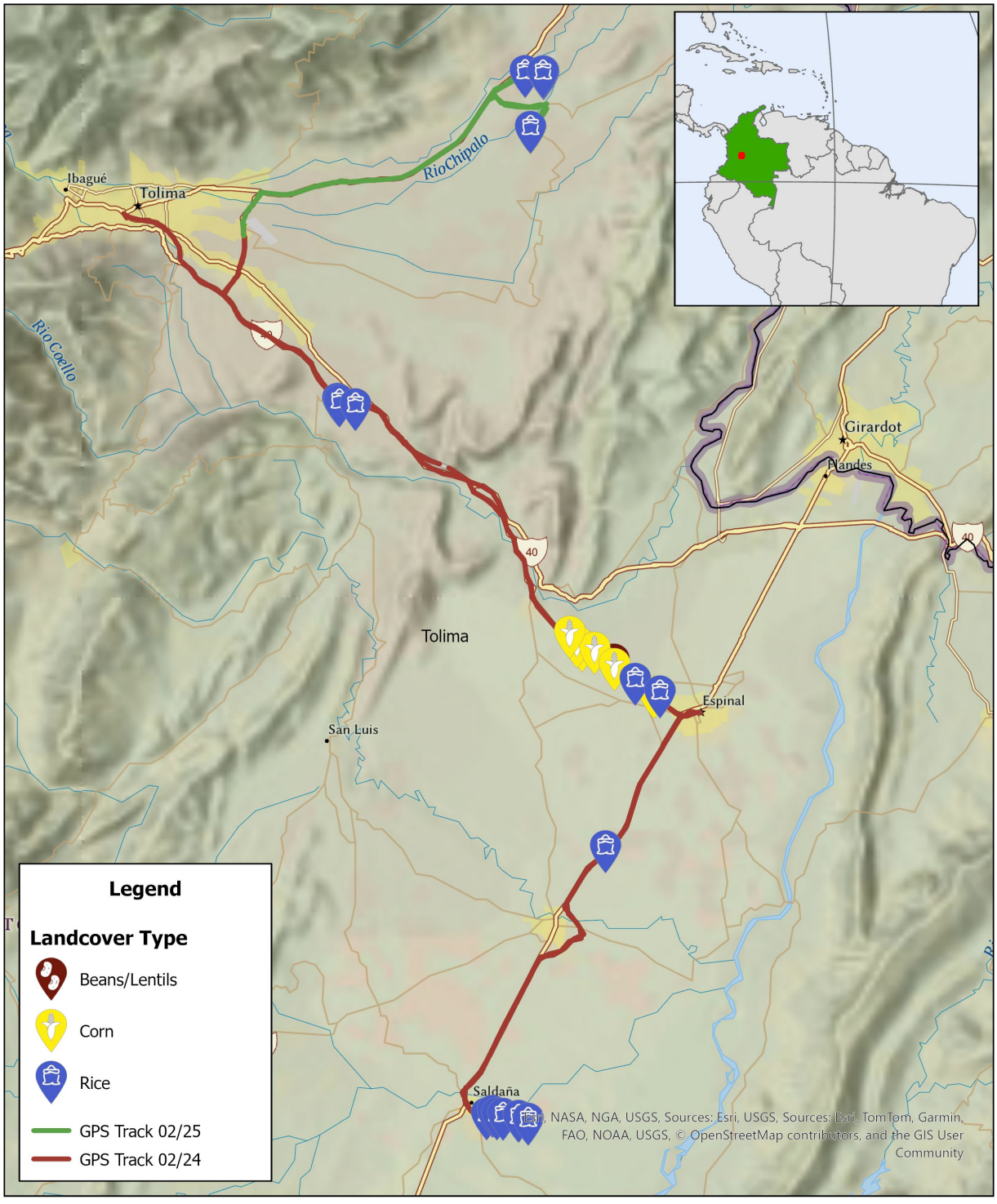

Figure 1. Crop assessment in Tolima Colombia, February 2025. Source: USDA/FAS

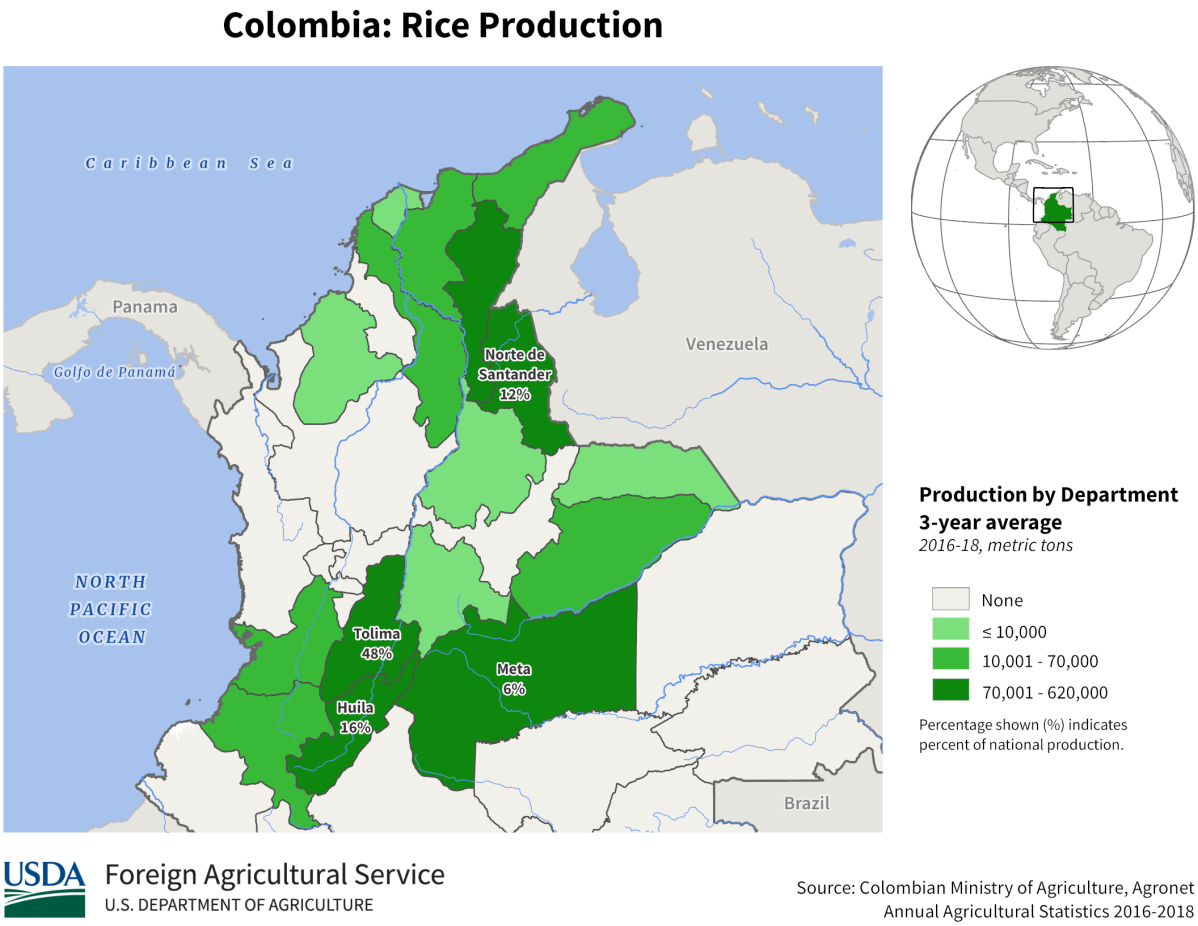

Figure 2. Rice production in Colombia

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Source: FAS Washington, Tolima Colombia

Figure 3. Irrigation system on a rice field in Tolima Colombia, February 2025

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Source: FAS Washington, Tolima Colombia

Figure 4. Some rice farms in Colombia continue to operate with laborers over machines. The workers in the photo were using shovels to dig the furrows to hold water between the rice rows.

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Source: FAS Washington, Tolima Colombia

Figure 5. The flowering rice in Tolima was in good condition.

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Current World Agricultural Production Reports
https://www.fas.usda.gov/data/world-agricultural-production

Production, Supply and Distribution Database (PSD Online)
https://apps.fas.usda.gov/psdonline/app/index.html#/app/home

Global Agricultural Information Network (Agricultural Attaché Reports)
https://www.fas.usda.gov/databases/global-agricultural-information-network-gain

Crop Explorer
https://ipad.fas.usda.gov/cropexplorer/

Global Agricultural and Disaster Assessment System (GADAS)
https://geo.fas.usda.gov/GADAS/index.html