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## **Mexican Coffee Production Estimate Reduced Because of Drought**

*by LADB Staff*

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In early January, the Consejo Mexicano del Cafe (CMC) announced a reduction in its estimate for Mexico's 1998-1999 coffee production to less than 4.4 million 60-kg. bags. The CMC had previously forecast the coffee crop for the current season, which runs through September, at 4.8 million bags.

CMC executive director Ruben Castillo said the revision is based on field surveys that showed the effect of drought on coffee yields was worse than anticipated. "This decline in production truly reflects climatic conditions," said Castillo. "Drought caused a lot of damage." There was some concern that the CMC would have to lower its production estimate further because of slight frost damage in early January to coffee trees in Puebla, which accounts for about 16% of the national coffee output. However, the frost was not severe enough to cause much damage.

Still, Mexico's coffee output has been at the mercy of weather conditions for the past three seasons. Drought, hurricane damage, and other weather factors limited production to 4.8 million bags of coffee in 1997-1998, down from about 5.3 million bags in 1996-1997. In addition to the reduced crop estimate, exports for the 1998-1999 marketing year are running far behind schedule.

The CMC estimated Mexico's coffee exports in October and November, the first two months of the crop year, at only slightly more than 247,000 bags. This means exports in December would have had to reach 553,000 bags for the CMC to reach its target of 800,000 bags for the first three months of the year.

In contrast, Mexico exported slightly more than 523,000 bags of coffee in the first two months of the 1997-1998 crop year. Despite the reduced production and slow exports, the CMC has made no revisions in its targeted export estimate of 3.8 million bags for the 1998-1999 crop year. (Sources: Reuters, 01/05/99, 01/12/99)

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