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India: New Delhi will want to import grain despite record crop. (Page 4)

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India: New Delhi is expecting a record grain crop in the coming year, but will still want to import a substantial quantity.

The food minister estimates that, even if the harvest lives up to a preliminary forecast of 95 million tons, India will have to import six to seven million tons of grain. Farmers and dealers, after two years of drought, probably will keep back at least that much.

The reluctance of states with a grain surplus to send food to deficit states and the central government's inclination to replenish reserves exhausted by severe shortages of the past two years also will contribute to the desire for imports.

The harvest could, of course, fall several million tons short of the 95 million-ton figure. The monsoon, now almost over, has been excellent, and flood damage to the fall crop has probably not been significant, but the spring harvest, which runs to about a quarter of domestic production, will depend largely on winter rains.

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