Food resources in Myanmar

Myanmar may be divided into five major topographic and climatic zones: the Mountainous Region, the Shan Plateau, the Central Dry Zone, the Delta Region, and the Coastal Region. Central Dry Zone, with the lowest annual rainfall; an extended dry season; and infertile, sandy soils. The Delta Region is a vast fertile area that is at the confluence of three major river systems: the Ayeyarwady,5 the Sittaung, and the Thanlwin. The Delta Region has highest land productivity; moderately high rainfall; generally flat topography; and an excellent environment for agriculture, especially rice production.. The southern portion of Coastal Region has the highest annual rainfall (exceeding 4,000 millimeters per annum) and is highly suitable for growing perennial crops such　as coconut, oil palm, and rubber. Just under 50% of the total land area is heavily forested or unsuitable for agriculture (mountains and deforested hill slopes).

Agricultural production takes place on only about 12.4 million hectares7 (ha), or 18% of

Myanmar’s total land area of about 68 million ha. Some 5.7 million ha is considered cultivable but is

currently unused. The principal crops include

(i) rice, which covers about two-thirds of the total area under cultivation;

(ii) beans and pulses, which have recently become major export crops and are grown on

about 4.2 million ha;

(iii) oilseeds (especially in the Central Dry Zone), grown on 3.3 million ha; production is

insufficient to meet national demand and about 200,000 tons of palm oil are imported

annually;

(iv) vegetables and chilies, grown on about 0.8 million ha, principally in highland areas; and

(v) other crops, including maize, cotton, rubber, sugarcane, and tropical fruit crops.

Associated with the country’s abundant water resources are substantial fisheries in the major

rivers, the 1,900 km of coastline, and the 500,000 ha of mangrove swamps. There is also considerable

potential for aquaculture development in the low-lying river delta areas in the south and center of

the country. Between 1998 and 2009, fisheries production almost tripled, mainly due to aquaculture

development.

Another significant component of the agriculture sector is livestock, which includes cattle,

buffalo, swine, and poultry. Most rural households raise livestock, thereby contributing significantly to

household protein (meat, eggs, and milk) and to farm economy through draft power and by-products

(hides and leather) Almost all livestock is raised in household backyards although there is some commercial production near major cities. Livestock numbers have little changed for the past decade, except for the poultry population, which has tripled—possibly due to the spread of commercial production techniques in peri-urban areas. The shortage of livestock for draft power is one of the constraints to increased agricultural production in Myanmar

