

2.3 In the country as a whole, the area seeded to grain has been as follows:

<u>Past and present acreages seeded to grain</u> (thousands of hectares)		
	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>
North	859	800
Central and south	851	390
<u>TOTAL</u>	1,710	1,190

The acreage seeded to durum wheat declined by about 31%, from 867,000 ha in 1987 to 598,000 ha in 1988. Acreage seeded to soft wheat shrank by 33% and that seeded to barley and triticale by 29% in comparison to the previous crop year, as the next table show.

<u>Acreages seed to main grains</u> (thousands of ha)		
	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>
Durum	867	518
Soft wheat	153	102
Barley & Triticale	690	490
<u>TOTAL</u>	1,710	1,190

2. Foreign Exchange Situation

When a Tunisian family consumes two kilograms of grain, one comes from local wheat, the other from imported wheat. Unless production increases much more than it has done since 1960, in a few years out of every three kilograms consumed only one will be produced locally. Moreover, every time an urban family eats a chicken, it consumes the 4.5 kg of corn, most of it imported, that was fed to the chicken. Tunisia thus imports about 10 million quintals of grain yearly, of which 2.5 million is corn. Twenty years ago, nothing was imported. It is also true, however, that the population was much smaller and per capita grain consumption was lower because the standard of living was lower.

This imbalance weighs heavily on the balance of trade. Tunisia spends 10% of its export revenue on grain, which means that much less for importing equipment and manufactured goods. Within a decade, the cost of imports will have practically doubled. At the same time, the increase in export revenue is liable to be severely curtailed by the decline in petroleum sales and the restrictions imposed by the EEC. This situation causes great concern. On the one hand it absorbs far too much hard currency, and on the other hand it makes the country more vulnerable, and thus jeopardizes its national sovereignty, for it is liable to become even more dependent on external grain supplies. Need we recall the importance of grain, which account for 60% of the population's calorie intake?

This is not the only problem, however. When a Tunisian family buys a loaf of bread, it pays only half the actual cost of producing, buying or marketing the grain and processing it into flour and bread. The other half is covered by government subsidies. This support has meant that low-income Tunisians do not