COUNTRY SNAPSHOT

Population: 780,971
- Urban: 357,625 (28%)
- Rural: 559,956 (72%)

Rice Availability (g/c/d): 281

Rice market:
- White milled rice from Pakistan

Production: Likely limited, no data

Domestic industrial rice milling: 0%

Regional trade: Limited to none

RICE IMPORTS

Number of importers: 3

Mode of imports: Containers

Total imports: 80,000 MT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type &amp; Origins</th>
<th>MT (% of imports)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White rice</td>
<td>60,000 (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>60,000 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basmati rice</td>
<td>20,000 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>20,000 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rice exported from Pakistan, the primary source of imported rice for Comoros. Photo: Pakistan Today

Sources: ¹CIA Factbook 2015 ²Onicor interview; Abbreviations: MT = metric tons
UNION OF COMOROS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
The Union of Comoros is comprised of three islands off the coast of east Africa, about midway between Mozambique and Madagascar. At 281 grams per capita per day, rice makes up around 80% of the cereal carbohydrates in the diet of the Union of Comoros. Other important sources of carbohydrates in the Comoroan diet comes from cassava, yams, sweet potatoes, bananas, plantains, breadfruit and other local crops.

Very little rice is grown in Comoros. The state import monopoly, Onicor, imports 75% of the rice in the country; in recent years 60,000 MT of white rice annually comes from two suppliers in Pakistan. The rice arrives pre-packed in 25 or 10 kg bags; the government sets the price of this imported rice.

Private importers dealing only in more expensive basmati rice from Pakistan supply the remainder of the rice imports. Japan donates 3,000 MT of rice of Southeast Asian origin per year to the government of Comoros as international development assistance.

Feasibility of fortification benefits from the consolidated importing industry, but government interventions in the price of rice could be problematic for costing fortified rice.

Table 1: Demographics and annual rice availability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Availability (MMT)</th>
<th>Imports (MMT)</th>
<th>Exports (MMT)</th>
<th>G/c/d</th>
<th>Production (MMT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>780,971</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>0.080</td>
<td>0.080</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2010-2015 trend:
+1.8%/year | +2.7% | Stable | Stable | -- | -- | Declining

G/c/d: grams per capita per day, MMT, million metric tons
1 CIA Factbook 2015
2 Based on author interviews; FAO and USDA have no data on Comoros.
3 Calculated: ((80,000 MT/population)*1,000,000 grams)/365 days

GRAIN CONSUMPTION AND FORTIFICATION STATUS
The most important cereal grain in Comoros is rice (281 g/c/d). Other important starchy roots, fruits, and vegetables are cassava, yams, breadfruit, and plantains. There is no source of data for the consumption of other cereal grains or information to describe subnational dietary patterns.

Table 2: Cereal grain consumption/availability and fortification status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Estimated g/c/d</th>
<th>Mandatory?</th>
<th>% Industrially milled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No mills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No mills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

G/c/d: grams per capita per day
1 Wheat flour: Estimated based on UN Comtrade import values of $5.3M US and assuming $250US per MT; Rice: based on import volumes reported by rice importers.
**Urban and rural consumption**

The Union of Comoros is reported to be just 28% urban. The largest urban conglomeration is the capital of Moroni, on the island of Grand Comore with 56,000. This island also has the highest level of urbanization.

That said the islands are so geographically small that there is not a big distinction between urban and rural habits or food accessibility. Most city dwellers visit their villages on the weekend, and rural people regularly come to the cities to shop. Many people living in villages work in the cities.

Without consumption data to indicate otherwise, it’s assumed that city and rural dwellers consume about the same amounts of rice on a daily basis. Local crops like cassava, breadfruit and bananas are likely also important alternative carbohydrates.

Rural households produce or are involved in the harvest of certain high value cash crops for export like cloves, ylang ylang flowers for distillation of essential oils, and to a lesser extent vanilla. Cash generated from production of these crops enables households to buy imported rice. One of the main sources of food and economic security for poorer households is remittances from the estimated 200,000-350,000 Comorans living abroad\(^1\), mainly concentrated in Marseille in France. These transfers accounted for 17% of GDP\(^2\) in 2010 and enable the country to finance food imports.

**Rice varieties and quality**

The majority of lower income households consume the state-imported white rice with 15% brokens, the standard type imported by the government. Higher income households consume basmati rice of Pakistani origin.

**DOMESTIC RICE PRODUCTION**

Very little rice is cultivated in Comoros now. The government does not collect data on agricultural production so it is not possible to ascertain how much was or is harvested. Some interviewees reported the existence of a Comoran rice with a special flavor; when available it is traded one kg for three kg of imported rice. In past decades much more rice was cultivated at higher elevations on the islands of Anjouan and Moheli, but with the depopulation of the countryside and the rising preference for cash crops, rice production has been mostly abandoned. In the 2000s China had a project to re-activate rice cultivation, but all activity stopped after the end of the project.

**IMPORTED RICE INDUSTRY**

Rice is by far the most important imported food commodity in Comoros by volume. However large volumes of potatoes, onions, tomatoes, wheat flour, pasta and other food staples are also imported.

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USDA does not publish data for rice imports to Comoros. Obtaining official customs data on rice and other commodity imports is also problematic, even in the country.

**Table 3: Annual rice import volumes, 2011-2015 (MMT)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rice imports</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.075</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Author’s estimate based on industry interviews

**Rice origins**

Pakistan is the source of about 90% of the rice consumed in Comoros. For the past three years Pakistani suppliers have won the tender to supply white rice to the government monopoly Onicor. Contracts are awarded for one-year supply. At the same time almost all of the more expensive basmati rice imported by private companies is of Pakistani origin. The in-country sources are supported by UN Comtrade data indicating 100% of rice in 2014 came from Pakistan, but contradicted by 2013 news that Vietnamese suppliers won the Onicor bid for 2013-2015.

The 3,000 MT of rice donated annually by Japan is purchased from Thailand, Vietnam or Myanmar.

**Mode of imports**

The Port of Mutsamudu is the only deepwater port in Comoros and serves as one of the main ports of entry for containerized shipments. Shipments arriving at the Port of Moroni must be transferred first to barges towed to the dock. All rice imported to Comoros arrives in 20-foot containers, pre-packed in 25 kg and 10 kg bags. Onicor rice comes in green polypropylene bags with Onicor markings.

**Rice importers**

The state trading company Onicor is the largest rice importer and the sole buyer of standard white rice. Two or three companies import food and other fast-moving consumer goods and either sell them in their supermarkets or act as wholesale distributors.

**Table 4: Major rice importing organizations and companies in Comoros**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Headquarters</th>
<th>Volumes</th>
<th>Rice type</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Onicor</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>60,000 MT</td>
<td>White 15% brokens</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KomoCash</td>
<td>Local, also wholesale &amp; retailer</td>
<td>10,000 MT</td>
<td>Basmati</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sawaprix</td>
<td>Local, also wholesale &amp; retailer</td>
<td>10,000 MT</td>
<td>Basmati</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Estimates of author

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1 UN Comtrade 2014, visualized by The Observatory of Economic Complexity and data cleaned by the BACI International Trade Database using BACI’s own methodology of harmonization.  


http://dlca.logcluster.org/display/public/DLCA/2.1.2+Comoros+Port+of+Mutsamudu+-+Anjouan

http://dlca.logcluster.org/display/public/DLCA/2.1.1+Comoros+Port+of+Moroni
Imported rice storage

Imported rice may be stored by Onicor in containers in the port yard for short periods. The Port of Moroni is able to store 3,500 twenty-foot equivalent containers (TEU), or 84,000 MT. There are also three warehouses at Port of Moroni with total 2,000 m² area but they are not currently used for storage purposes. The Port of Mutsumudu is able to store 19,000 TEU, or 456,000 MT.

Upon arrival in the port most of the shipment is released directly to the wholesalers who store it in their own warehouses.

Government policy

Government’s role in rice imports is officially to guarantee supply at stable prices. Based on the price paid to the Pakistani suppliers, the target retail price is US$ 0.64 per kg. Shopkeepers reported interruptions or shortages in supply, during which they can sell the Onicor rice at higher prices.

RICE MILLING

No rice milling takes place on any of the three islands. In the past one Chinese project for local production included a husking mill, but production did not continue after project’s end.

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE

Wholesale

Onicor sells white rice directly to approximately ten wholesalers who supply small shopkeepers and market vendors on the three islands. The activity of each wholesaler is limited to the island where it is based. Although the capital is on Grand Comoro Island, most Onicor containers are delivered to the main port on Anjouan (the harbor in Anjouan allows for berthing big tonnage vessels). Small container vessels arrive less regularly in the port of Moroni, and the containers must be transferred to small barges to the pier.

Onicor permits two of the largest private food importers, KomoCash and Sawaprix, to import white rice directly from Pakistan under the Onicor contract. This rice is in the companies' supermarkets and may also be supplied to wholesalers as well.

Retail

Hundreds of small shops sell 10 kg and 25 kg bags of Onicor white rice purchased from wholesalers. Retail price is around $0.64 per kg versus Onicor’s FOB purchase price of $440 per ton ($0.44 per kg).

WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

Despite about 19 UN agencies (including five or six at the resident/country director level) being represented in Comoros, WFP no longer has a presence in the country. WFP leased warehouses

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7 Assuming on average a 20-foot container holds 24 MT of rice.
and operated food distribution programs in the 2000s, particularly on the more densely populated island of Anjouan, but that has stopped.

Given that schoolchildren attend school either in the morning or afternoon, there is little opportunity for school lunch programs to serve fortified rice.

**REGIONAL TRADE**
There is very little in the way of regional rice trade. It is possible that some of the Onicor rice imported to Comoros is smuggled to Mayotte (geographically a part of Comoros, but under French administration).

**REGULATORY MONITORING**
The government restricts importation of white rice to Onicor and attempts to keep a stable market price through its monopoly.

**RICE FORTIFICATION – SWOT ANALYSIS**

**Strengths**
- Rice is the main staple and is likely consumed by the entire population.
- Onicor’s control of 75% of rice imports and consumption means government can dictate the specifications in their tenders.
- There are a small number of rice importers

**Weaknesses**
- No other foods are currently fortified, suggesting the national government does not have fortification history or experience.

**Opportunities**
- Its membership in SUN could be used as an advocacy angle.

**Threat**
- Government in Comoros is notoriously corrupt and poor at implementing projects supported by international donors.
- Government intervention in the price of rice may have political implications for rice fortification costing.
Appendix 1. RICE INDUSTRY CONTACTS

Company
Onicor – Office Nationale d’Importation et Commercialization de Riz
Iconi- Moroni
Comoros
Date of meeting: March 23, 2016
Participating
Abdou Ali Chalidi, Agent Comptable
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chaidi_abdou@yahoo.fr

Organization
UNICEF
Maison des Nation Unies
B.P. 497
Moroni
Comoros
Office: +269 773 09 93
Date of meeting: April 1, 2016
Participating
Issa Coulibaly, Chef du Programme Survie et Developpement de l’enfant / Head of Child Survival and Development (acting country director)
Mobile +269 334 0041
lcoulibaly@unicef.org

Company
KomoCash
Moroni,
Comoros

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Sawaprix
Moroni,
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