

Uzbekistan doubles rice output in 2002

TASHKENT (December 10 2002) : Uzbekistan has completed its rice harvest and gathered 143,100 tonnes, more than double last year's total of 68,300, an agriculture and water resources ministry official said on Monday. But the final figure was still well below the planned 195,500 tonnes. Uzbekistan, a country of 25 million where the national dish is a rice-based delicacy called plov, consumes 500,000 tonnes of rice per year. The official told Reuters the harvest was higher because of greater availability of water for irrigation.

Last year a drought meant only 25,900 hectares were harvested out of 37,350 planted, whereas this year 57,200 hectares out of 59,900 were harvested. The drought, which lasted throughout 2000 and 2001, led the impoverished ex-Soviet Central Asian state to import massive volumes, mostly in the form of food aid from the United States. The country's last good rice harvest was in 1999, when it produced 420,800 tonnes. -Reuters- Copyright 2002 Reuters (Published under arrangements with Reuters)