**U.S.D.A. lowers 2018-19 sugar supply forecast**

Stocks-to-use ratio drops to 13.2% from 13.6% in March

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Agriculture in its April 9 World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates report slightly lowered its forecast of domestic beet and cane sugar production in the current 2018-19 marketing year that ends Sept. 30.

Beet sugar production was forecast at 4,997,000 short tons, raw value, down 7,000 tons from March and down 282,000 tons, or 5%, from record outturn of 5,279,000 tons in 2017-18. Refined cane sugar production was forecast at 4,063,000 tons, down 36,000 tons from March but up 49,000 tons from 4,014,000 tons a year earlier. Total sugar production for the current year was forecast at 9,060,000 tons, down 42,457 tons from March and down 233,000 tons from record outturn of 9,293,000 tons in 2017-18.

“U.S. sugar supply for 2018-19 is decreased 42,457 short tons, raw value, based on processor-reported reductions to beet sugar production and cane sugar production in Florida,” the U.S.D.A. said.

There were no changes made from March by the U.S.D.A. for 2018-19 imports, including imports from Mexico at 897,000 tons, down 326,000 tons, or 27%, from 2017-18.

Total sugar supply was forecast at 13,930,000 tons, down about 43,000 tons from March and down 515,000 tons, or 3.6%, from 14,445,000 tons last year.

Total 2018-19 sugar use was forecast at 12,305,000 tons, unchanged from March but down 133,000 tons from 2017-18, with deliveries for food at 12,125,000 tons, unchanged from March but up 77,000 tons from last year.

There also were no changes made to estimated supply and use for 2017-18.

The closely watched ending stocks-to-use ratio was forecast at 13.2% for 2018-19, down from 13.6% as the March forecast and down from 16.1% estimated for 2017-18. The 2018-19 ratio is below the minimum 13.5% required in the U.S.-Mexico suspension agreements, as well as below the 13.5% to 15.5% range typically seen as the U.S.D.A.’s target range.

The U.S.D.A. made no changes from March to 2017-18 estimates for 2018-19 forecasts for Mexico.