

Article | 8 December 2025

COMMODITIES, FOOD & AGRI

A tighter 2026/27 corn market suggests prices have bottomed

Corn prices have come under pressure this year due to record corn production. However, we believe that a tightening in the market in 2026/27 should provide better support for prices in 2026



A tighter corn market in the coming year should support prices

Record US corn output weighs on the market

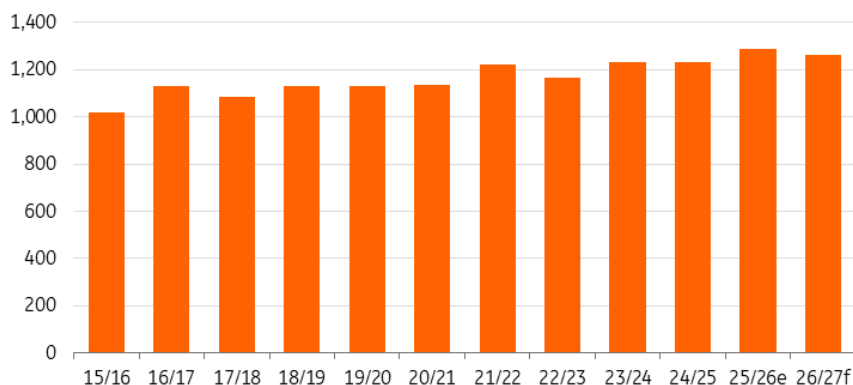
The US will produce a record corn crop in the 2025/26 season, with farmers expanding corn acreage as they cut soybean acreage due to the escalation in trade tensions with China. Record acreage, along with record yields this season, means that the US will produce more than 425m tonnes of corn, up more than 12% YoY and eclipsing the previous record of 390m tonnes in 2023/24. The large crop is also expected to see the 2025/26 season ending with almost 55m tonnes of stocks, the highest level since the 2018/19 season. The bearish domestic balance in the US has put pressure on CBOT corn for much of the year, a trend that is likely to continue into early next year.

The growth in US supply this season means that the global balance will also look relatively more comfortable over 2025/26. Global corn production is set to hit record levels and despite healthy consumption growth, helped by the weakness in prices, we still expect ending stocks for the 2025/26 season to grow by more than 4m tonnes YoY to almost 296m tonnes, which

will keep the stocks-to-use ratio steady at around 23%. The global balance suggests that the upside in corn prices is likely limited, at least until we get more colour on prospects for the 2026/27 marketing year.

The large increase in US supply this season is only partly offset by declines from the EU and Brazil. EU corn production is estimated to fall by 5.5% to 55.8m tonnes, driven by a reduction in area, with increased area under wheat and barley. Meanwhile, for Brazil, we are assuming production this season falls almost 2% YoY to a little more than 133m tonnes, with the view that yields ease from the high levels achieved last season.

Global corn production set to hit record levels in 2025/26 (m tonnes)



Source: USDA, ING Research

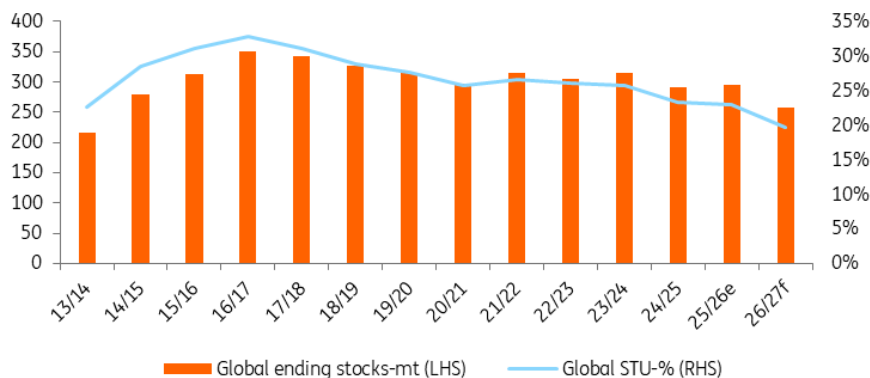
The market should tighten in 2026/27

We believe the corn market will see more meaningful tightening in the 2026/27 marketing year, with a global deficit of around 39m tonnes. This would see global ending stocks next season falling to a little below 260m tonnes, equivalent to a stocks-to-use ratio of 20%. This should start providing some upside to corn prices in the 2026/27 season.

A key assumption behind the tightening in the corn market is that we do not expect US corn production to sustain the levels seen in the current marketing year. A deal between the US and China should see US farmers increase soybean acreage at the expense of corn acreage. In addition, we are assuming that yields will fall from the record levels seen in 2025/26 and towards the five-year average. This would see a US corn harvest totalling around 394m tonnes – down 7% YoY, but still the second-largest harvest on record. Clearly, the risk is that we see China falling short when it comes to purchases of US soybeans, or a re-escalation of trade tensions, which may see US farmers maintaining corn plantings at similar levels to this season. Such a scenario would leave the corn market better supplied than we expect next season, which would also likely cap any upside for corn prices.

Meanwhile, for Brazil, it is very early to have a strong view on the 2026/27 season, with the 2025/26 harvest not even underway. However, with the view that planted area will likely trend higher, Brazil could potentially see supply exceed the record level of 137m tonnes achieved in 2022/23.

Global corn stocks to fall in 2026/27



Source: USDA, ING Research

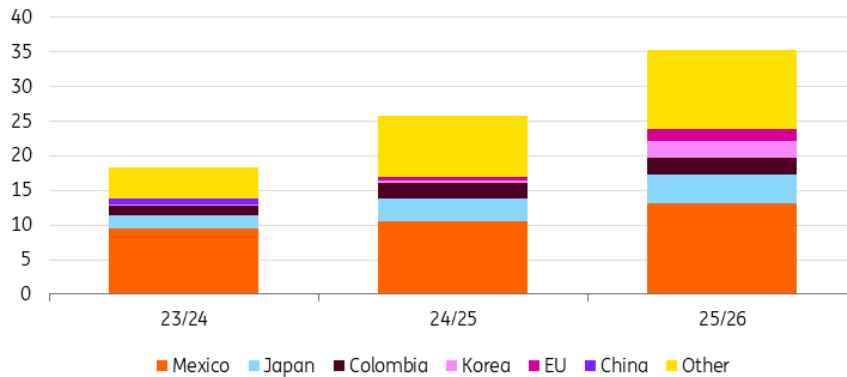
US corn export sales surge despite trade tensions

Trade tensions between the US and China this year have had little impact on US corn export volumes. Total export commitments in 2025/26 are up 37% YoY so far this season. Record supply has increased export availability, while the broader weakness in the US dollar this year would have also increased the competitiveness of US corn on the export market.

China has been noticeably absent from purchasing US corn this season, much like other agricultural commodities. However, this absence is less impactful on the US corn market. Chinese demand for US corn has been edging lower in recent years, after peaking in 2021 and 2022. Even during those years, China was a relatively small proportion of total US exports. In the 2023/24 season, only around 5% of US corn exports went to China, while in 2024/25 this fell to less than 1%.

However, looking to 2026 and with the trade truce between the US and China, there is the potential for China to start increasing purchases of US corn once again. A move that would help tighten up the US corn market.

US corn export commitments grow strongly in 25/26 (m tonnes)



Source: USDA, ING Research

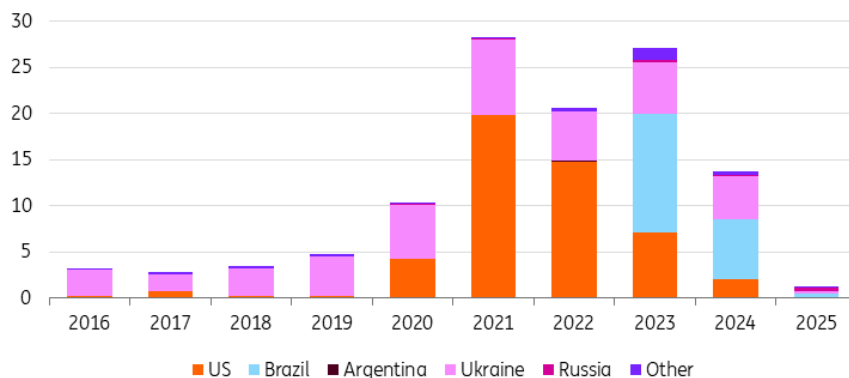
Note: Data as of end of October for each marketing year

Will China return to the world market for imports?

The reduced buying of US corn seen from China has coincided with an overall decline in corn import volumes with stronger domestic production. China imported more than 27m tonnes of corn in 2023, while in the first 10 months of 2025, imports have totalled less than 1.3m tonnes.

While production has been stronger, it is still not enough to meet domestic demand. Therefore, China has been drawing down corn inventories over the last two seasons. Clearly, this is not sustainable in the medium to long term. Therefore, it seems as though it is not a question of if China will return to the global market, but more of a question of when it will do so. Clearly, a return of large Chinese buying would tighten up the ex-China corn balance, providing further support to prices.

China corn imports collapse, but buying will have to return to the world market at some point (m tonnes)



Source: China Customs, ING Research

Note: 2025 import data covers Jan-Oct

Author

Warren Patterson

Head of Commodities Strategy

Warren.Patterson@asia.ing.com

Disclaimer

This publication has been prepared by the Economic and Financial Analysis Division of ING Bank N.V. ("ING") solely for information purposes without regard to any particular user's investment objectives, financial situation, or means. *ING forms part of ING Group (being for this purpose ING Group N.V. and its subsidiary and affiliated companies)*. The information in the publication is not an investment recommendation and it is not investment, legal or tax advice or an offer or solicitation to purchase or sell any financial instrument. Reasonable care has been taken to ensure that this publication is not untrue or misleading when published, but ING does not represent that it is accurate or complete. ING does not accept any liability for any direct, indirect or consequential loss arising from any use of this publication. Unless otherwise stated, any views, forecasts, or estimates are solely those of the author(s), as of the date of the publication and are subject to change without notice.

The distribution of this publication may be restricted by law or regulation in different jurisdictions and persons into whose possession this publication comes should inform themselves about, and observe, such restrictions.

Copyright and database rights protection exists in this report and it may not be reproduced, distributed or published by any person for any purpose without the prior express consent of ING. All rights are reserved. ING Bank N.V. is authorised by the Dutch Central Bank and supervised by the European Central Bank (ECB), the Dutch Central Bank (DNB) and the Dutch Authority for the Financial Markets (AFM). ING Bank N.V. is incorporated in the Netherlands (Trade Register no. 33031431 Amsterdam). In the United Kingdom this information is approved and/or communicated by ING Bank N.V., London Branch. ING Bank N.V., London Branch is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and is subject to regulation by the Financial Conduct Authority and limited regulation by the Prudential Regulation Authority. ING Bank N.V., London branch is registered in England (Registration number BR000341) at 8-10 Moorgate, London EC2 6DA. For US Investors: Any person wishing to discuss this report or effect transactions in any security discussed herein should contact ING Financial Markets LLC, which is a member of the NYSE, FINRA and SIPC and part of ING, and which has accepted responsibility for the distribution of this report in the United States under applicable requirements.

THINK economic and financial analysis

Additional information is available on request. For more information about ING Group, please visit www.ing.com.