

## Spain: Extremadura expects 14% more tomatoes

Extremadura's Tomato Board, which brings together tomato producers and processing industries, has outlined the prospects for the sector in the upcoming campaign. Despite a small reduction of the acreage, the production volume may increase by up to 14% compared to last year. This will be the goal, as long as nothing unexpected happens, such as the storms recorded last July. As for prices, those paid to the producers will continue to fall.

"If there isn't a big harvest, many growers are going to lose money," assured Domingo Fernández, president of the Fruit and Vegetable Sector at Cooperativas Agroalimentarias in Extremadura. "Prices continue to fall because there is a lot of stock in the market and we could say that the expected production volume this campaign is greater than it should be," states Manuel Vázquez Calleja, CEO of Conesa, the main tomato group in Extremadura.

The meeting of the Tomato Board has served to reveal the basic statistics for this campaign. On the one hand, the acreage will be practically the same. While a total of 24,915.05 hectares were planted last season, now there will be 250 less, with a total of 24,664.30 hectares. On the other hand, the contracted production will record a significant change compared to last year. In the previous campaign, the prospect had been to reach 2,200,190,224 kilos (2.2 million tonnes) but the weather in areas of Las Vegas Altas del Guadiana and La Serena ruined the initial forecast. In the end, the total harvest volume amounted to 1,872,818,030 kilos, with a yield of 78,920 kilos per hectare.

For this campaign, the prospect is to reach 2,140,333,233 kilos. If it is achieved, it would entail a 14.2% increase compared to what was harvested last year, with a yield of 86,780 kilos per hectare.

"We will see how things develop in spring and early summer. We are always exposed to variations, although a sudden change over what was planned is never good," added Vázquez.

With these figures, Conesa, with 715,000 tonnes, accounts for 33% of the expected tomato production for this campaign in Extremadura. Meanwhile, the cooperatives and cooperative industries that are part of Cooperativas Agroalimentarias account for 58.67% of the

contracted volume. "It is a growing percentage, as there are more and more growers willing to take their tomatoes to cooperatives," explains Domingo Fernández.

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