

3.6% increase in potato area in North West Europe estimated

The first potato area estimate from the North-Western European Potato Growers (NEPG) region suggests a possible increase of 3.6% compared with last season. The total planted area is estimated to be approximately 572,000ha (excluding potatoes for seed and starch), which would be the highest area for the last ten years, if achieved.

Amber Cottingham, analyst at AHDB said: “Earlier expectations suggested growth in the area would have been much larger in order to fulfil the continuously expanding requirements of the European processing industry. The poor yielding crop of the 2016 season has forestalled this by causing a shortage in seed availability across much of Europe. Seed availability in GB was better as yield in Scotland, a key producer of seed potatoes, was higher than in other areas of Europe.”

It is important to note is that the GB proportion of the 2017 area estimate is based on an historical average. The NEPG area estimate is therefore likely to change as more information becomes available.

Production potential dependent on yield

Although these estimates suggest a substantial increase in planted area, this does not guarantee ten-year high output. There is still much of the season to come and yields vary, driven mainly by weather, a factor that is difficult to predict.

AHDB Potatoes’ production modelling based on planted area and various yield scenarios, forecast a year-on-year production increase of between 3% and 21%.

Amber said: “Our analysis suggests that if the current area estimate is realised, production is likely to increase across the NEPG area, even if the yields achieved are similar to the lows of 2012, which was an usually low yielding year. However, with a possible range of between 25 million tonnes and almost 30 million tonnes, there is still considerable uncertainty around how the season will likely play out.”

Stocks low across the region

Most NEPG countries have indicated that stocks are low, especially for free-buy potatoes.

Amber said: “With processing levels currently high and around three months still to go before the first early processing varieties would typically be available, this could keep prices firm. Several NEPG countries will soon publish updated stocks figures based on grower surveys, including the AHDB end-March stock figures, which will give a better picture of the stocks held in grower’s stores across the region.”

Planting progressing well

Planting is progressing well for all of the NEPG countries with many reporting ‘ideal’ conditions and progress ahead of average. In Great Britain, with approximately 70,000ha planted to 22 April, the

current estimate is up by around 37,000ha on the same week in 2016 and approximately 5,000ha up on the same point in 2015.

Lien article : <http://www.freshplaza.com/article/174749/3.6-percent-increase-in-potato-area-in-North-West-Europe-estimated>