

Germany: Area of apple orchards increased by 7% in 2017

Apples are the most important orchard fruit in Germany. They were cultivated on about 34,000 hectares in 2017. This is an increase in surface of 7% compared to 2012 (31,700 hectares). Furthermore, the German Federal Statistical Office (Destatis) stated that the total commercial orchard surface is almost 50,000 hectare in 2017. Which is an increase of at least 4,300 hectares compared to 2012.

Slightly more than two thirds of the entire surface is used for apple trees. Pear trees with 2,100 hectares only cover 4% of the surface. Sweet cherries, with almost 6,100 hectares, and standard plums varieties, 4,200 hectares, are the most popularly cultivated stone fruit varieties. They are followed by sour cherries on 1,900 hectares and Mirabelle plums and greengages, cultivated on 600 hectares. There was a significant decrease of the surface used for the cultivation of sour cherries (-15%) compared to 2012.

The main share of almost 28,300 hectares is used to cultivate dessert apples, 83% of the surface. About 71 million apple trees grow on this surface. The most important varieties are Elstar, (6,700 hectares), Braeburn (about 2.800 hectares) and Gala (almost 2.400 hectares). 68% of the cultivated pears are consumption fruit (almost 1,500 hectares and almost 2.6 million pear trees). The most important consumption pear varieties are Conference (nearly 400 hectares), Alexander Lucas (350 hectares) and the Williams pear (250 hectares).

About 850 organic farms cultivate 7,500 hectares of fruit in orchards. This is a share of 15% of the total commercial fruit orchard surfaces. Organic apples occupy the main share of the surface, 6,100 hectares. 18% of the apples are organically cultivated, followed by pears (15%), several plum varieties (7%) and sweet cherries (5%) on about 300 hectares of organic acreage.

In the last 5 years the number of farms continued to decrease to almost 7,200 (-4% compared to 2012). This led to an increase of the acreage per farm from 6.1 hectare in 2012 to 7.0 hectare in 2017.

63% of the commercial fruit orchards are situated in three western German states, Baden-Württemberg (918,300 hectares) Lower-Saxony (about 9,200 hectares) and Rhineland-Palatinate (4,000 hectares). The most important regions can be found near Lake Constance, at the foot of the Alps, as well as in the Altes Land region in Lower Saxony and around Hamburg..

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