

EU-28 potato production up by 9% in 2017

According to Eurostat estimates, the EU-28 potato production in 2016 stood at 56.9 million tonnes, up 5.6% compared to the previous year. In the EU-5 (Germany, Belgium, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) the total potato production decreased by 0.5% compared to the previous year and amounted to 33.7 million tonnes, which accounted for 59.2% of the EU-wide harvest.

As reported by IERiGŻ experts, the production of potatoes for consumption and processing (except for seed and starch) in these countries decreased by approximately 3% compared to 2015, down to 24.6 million tonnes. As a result of the smaller harvest, the potato market in these countries was under strong pressure from the demand, which was reflected in high prices. The average level of prices for edible potatoes in the EU-4 market (excluding the UK) for the season 2015/16 was around 220 Euro/tonne, compared to 165 Euro/tonne last season and around 55 Euro/tonne two years earlier.

High prices in the 2016/17 season have motivated growers in most Western European countries to expand their potato acreage, which in the EU-5 (Germany, Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Great Britain) amounted to about 579 thousand hectares in 2017; an increase of 4.6% compared to the previous year. Meanwhile, the acreage devoted to potatoes for starch and seed in the EU-5 decreased from 252 to 243 thousand hectares, i.e. almost 4%. Among the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the acreage devoted to potato cultivation increased only in Poland, Bulgaria and Latvia.

The acreage also grew in the Scandinavian countries. For the whole EU-28, the total potato acreage in 2017 is estimated at 1.74 million hectares, or 2.4% above the previous year's level. The conditions in 2017 were generally favourable for the production of high yields, both in Western and Central and Eastern Europe.

As a result, yields in Belgium and France increased by 15-16%, and in Germany and the Netherlands by 2-3%. Among the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the highest increase in the yield was recorded in Poland (by about 6%, to 298 dt/ha).

In 2017, the total potato production in the EU-28 has grown from 56.9 to 62.0 million tonnes, i.e. up by 9%, largely due to an increase in Poland's potato production (by about 1 million tonnes). In the EU-5, the potato production amounted to 37.2 million tonnes and was 10.5% higher than in the previous year.

In Germany, the potato harvest stood at almost 11.3 million tonnes and was almost 5% higher than the year before. In France, the harvest increased by about 15% to 8 million tonnes. In the Netherlands, it grew by 14% to 7.4 million tonnes, and in Belgium it increased by almost 15% to 5 million tonnes. In the UK, potato production stood at 5.5 million tonnes and was about 3% greater than a year earlier. The consequence of the harvest growth is the decline in potato prices in Western Europe. This applies particularly to the potatoes for processing, but has also affected those intended for direct consumption.

IERiGŻ experts report that the potato harvest in Poland in 2017 amounted to about 9.8 million tonnes, according to estimates of IHAR-PIB and IERiGŻ-PIB, and was almost 1 million tonnes greater than in 2016. This growth in the production is a consequence of both an expansion of the acreage devoted to the crop and the higher yields.

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