

Bulgarian tomatoes and cucumbers unable to meet domestic demand

Bulgaria's tomato production is growing, although this year it will still be insufficient to meet the demand from the domestic market. Meanwhile, in the cucumber market, domestic consumers rely heavily on imports.

"Self-sufficiency levels in the country are not improving tangibly," said a representative of the Centre for Agricultural Analyses in Agriculture (CAPA) in its monthly newsletter. According to preliminary data from Eurostat, in 2017, Bulgaria produced about 159 thousand tonnes of tomatoes, 55 thousand tonnes of cucumbers and 55 thousand tonnes of peppers.

"The sharp rise in the tomato production is impressive (13% on an annual basis; a strong leap for the past 2-3 years)," analysts said. But with peppers, there is a marked decline in the production, with a 23% reduction each year. And for cucumbers, the drop was of 27%.

The SARA forecast for this year is that self-sufficiency with tomatoes will be only 68%. For comparison, in 2007, this percentage reached 82%, taking only official imports into account. At Piper, expectations are that levels of self-sufficiency in 2018 will be around 77%. In 2007, this percentage was 87%.

This year's cucumber production is likely to provide 89% self-sufficiency, compared to 101% ten years ago.

Wholesale prices in the first quarter of this year are lower than last year. In the second quarter, SARA forecasts a fall in wholesale prices of up to 5% for tomatoes and 55% for cucumbers.

"Albania and Macedonia have a positive trade balance in this sector," analysts said. Macedonia has a net trade balance of EUR 70-80 million per year. Albania has a neutral trade balance in the Fruit and Vegetables sector, producing 280 thousand tonnes of tomatoes in the year 2017.

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