

Press release NEPG – September 2019

NEPG estimates upcoming potato harvest on almost 5 years average level



The NEPG (North-Western European Potato Growers) estimates the forecasted potato harvest 2019 between 27 and 27,3 million tons for the 5 leading potato countries. This is 3% more than the 5 years average and 12% more than last year. At this stage, the estimations are mainly based upon trial digs. Nevertheless, the NEPG stresses that this is an estimation - final trial digs will take place beginning of October - and almost the whole crop is still on the fields.

More potatoes planted

This year it is not the yield that made the larger harvest, but the increase of the potato area compared with last year. All NEPG countries, except Great Britain planted more potatoes, in France even 14% more than the 5 years average area.

Over the 5 countries the average yield is estimated, right now, at 44.7 to/ha compared with 47,1 to/ha of the 5 years average. Last year with the lack of rain the average was 40,9 to/ha.

Large differences

Due to the small percentage of irrigation (and somewhat less rainfall too) the lowest yield estimations were given in Belgium. In France, Belgium and larger parts of Germany the crop on the field has almost died off with hardly growth power for the remaining days or weeks. The latest digs showed a levelling of the yields. In the Netherlands, Great Britain and in some German areas still green crops can be found in some locations. Also, within the 5 countries enormous yield differences are reported by variety and location. Those areas with low irrigation opportunities show the lowest yields. In Great Britain the harvest is later and here the yields are based upon the 5 years average. Also, the starch potato harvest shows lower yields this year.

The market

These estimations are not reflected in the actual price level and the NEPG expects that the price could increase over the upcoming weeks on the continent. The factories were hungrier for raw material early in the summer than last year, and the season started nearly empty and a bit sooner than usual. And processing capacities are still increasing. At one point, the processing season was a bit disrupted with earlies from Bordeaux, Rhineland and Belgium arriving at the same time, which didn't help prices firming. Competitiveness of final products from EU will be better this year on the global market, with potato prices not so high than last year. Eastern European countries report much lower yields. The EU satellite programme MARS indicates a 5 to 10% lower harvest (compared to the 5 years average) in Poland and several other Eastern countries. There is already a lively export from the NEPG countries to Poland and Romania. The MARS indications for the EU 28 are 3.1% lower compared with the 5 years average (August report).

By the end of October, the NEPG will do a second estimation over the big 5.