



POTATO GROWERS OF CANADA

LES PRODUCTEURS UNIS DE POMMES DE TERRE DU CANADA

Planting Update May 27, 2021

Potato growers everywhere always look forward to cleaning off the slate and starting a new crop. Seeding in Western Canada is winding up, while growers in the Atlantic region are in full planting mode. Here is a summary of progress to date:

Prince Edward Island:

Planting conditions in April pointed towards an early spring in PEI, but unfortunately most of May has been cool and wet, creating some delays in planting the crop. Planting is about 25% completed at this time. Acreage could be up above last year, and it is hoped there will not be a drought again like last summer, which will enable at least average or better yields, to increase the overall production needed for existing markets. The province is optimistic that market demand will be increasing this year and into the new year following recovery from COVID. Fresh inventory is low, with packers finishing up early, and/or managing their inventory according to their customer's needs. Seed has also been extremely tight to plant this crop.

New Brunswick:

Planting is around 85% complete with many farmers having a day or two left to finish up. Soil was cool earlier on, but also very dry, allowing for good progress – some farms have been done for a week or so and have received precipitation in the last few days. There has been some reduction in acres devoted to chip production, however growers were happy to be able to convert those acres to French fry production to meet the needs for increased contract volume in that sector. Limited seed supply was the challenging factor in the shift over. Supplies of old crop in general, have been reduced overall.

Quebec:

Spring arrived early for most regions of Quebec providing nearly ideal planting conditions. Planting is about 85% complete with the northern and eastern regions finishing up. Although the spring has been windy and dry, most areas received much needed rainfall yesterday, making for good soil conditions. A slight acreage increase is expected in the fresh and seed sectors while chips will likely remain flat. Processing acres for French fries will need to move up by 15% to accommodate increased contract volumes. There does not seem to be any open seed available. Quality of old crop in storage is good overall, however supply is tight, and a few of the larger packers will just make it to new crop. The Pandemic has brought an increase in demand from the retail sector and the province now expects food service demand to ramp up within a week of seeing restrictions being lifted for sit down restaurants and large group gatherings. If demand does come back aggressively it will be challenged by low inventories of available supply.

Ontario:

Planting is about 90% complete and most growers should finish up by the weekend. In the northern area, soil temperatures have been ideal for planting, although cooler for germination and growth. Growers in the south west started planting in mid-April, finishing up ten days ago with hardly any rain delays. Earlier fields have good emergence. Temperatures in that area have been very warm, although dry, and rainfall has been welcomed in recent days. Overall acres in the province should be similar although consistent chip demand could see some shift from the fresh sector into that category.

Manitoba:

Planting for the **Processing** side in Manitoba was completed by mid-May. Seed piece development has been good, and the first planted fields of Ranger Russets are beginning to emerge. Soil conditions were extremely dry during planting, however some much needed

rain of between 20 and 50mm fell over the potato growing region in the past 7 days. Soil conditions still remain dry at lower depths and some reservoirs remain empty. Some increase in runoff was observed to help bring the Shellmouth Dam Reservoir, which supplies water for irrigation out of the Assiniboine River, to summer operating levels. Seed supplies were tight, but growers were able to source enough to meet the needs for the increased processing acres. Old crop in storages is holding up well and processors continue to run hard with both local and imported raw product.

On the **Fresh** side, planting went well, although similarly into very dry conditions. Reservoirs in the area are mostly empty, although the region did receive an inch of rain last week. Yellow acres are unchanged with red acres down slightly.

Saskatchewan:

Growers experienced an early spring and like other western areas planted into very dry conditions. The province usually plants around 6,000 acres.

Alberta:

Many processing growers in the Taber region finished up planting by mid-May. Planting conditions were extremely dry although rainfall amounts of 15-18 mm were reported in the southern area over the weekend. Warm temperatures are providing good growth in the hills. Seed growers in the northern part of the province have about a week of planting left. Soil conditions have been better with good moisture carryover. The province has been a bit long on seed, while table potatoes are almost all cleaned up. Overall acres in Alberta will need to increase as the province returns to 2019 levels.

British Columbia:

BC had cool but clear weather in April and May, allowing for early and steady planting. Most growers finished up by mid-May. The first early Warba's were planted on March 3rd and came on the market on May 20th, although recent rains have hindered digging. Steady supplies of varieties without skin set for local markets will not be

available until well into June. Potato acreage may increase slightly with some shift away from Warba and Chieftain varieties. Shipping of old crop has been steady with firm prices. British Columbia is one of the first provinces to roll out an operational plan post pandemic, and industry is looking forward to the expectation of greater levels of indoor dining within restaurants.

The Crop Transition Conference will be held this year on Monday, June 14th beginning at 1:00 CDT in Fargo, North Dakota. Hosted by the United Potato Growers of America, it is a great opportunity to view the supply and shipping schedule as old crop transitions into the new. For those unable to travel due to COVID-19 restrictions and isolation requirements, we will be providing a virtual link as well.

The information contained in the UPGC Crop Reports, is gathered from our organization's directors and contacts across the country. Their input is greatly appreciated.

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