



POTATO GROWERS OF CANADA

LES PRODUCTEURS UNIS DE POMMES DE TERRE DU CANADA

Planting Intentions 2021 Canadian Potato Crop

May 7, 2021

Potato acreage in Canada will not be officially reported until early July, so it is often helpful to take an early look at industry projections across the country.

The analysis is more difficult this year as demand for potato products returns to pre-COVID levels. This is further precipitated by delayed contract negotiations between processors and growers across the country for pricing, and now the determination of volume needed for 21-22. Demand for French fries, potato chips, and table potatoes has returned to almost normal or surpassed previous year consumption depending on the sector. The seed acreage will be all needed to plant these acreages. In addition, the supply pipeline will be emptied by the end of the marketing year, in comparison to this time last year when business was extremely chaotic.

For 2021, UPGC estimates Canadian Potato Acreage will increase by 2.3%, to 367,800 acres.

Acreage planted last year (359,480 acres) actually declined from 2019 levels due to market uncertainty at planting time.

Here is an outlook by growing area:

Prince Edward Island.

The province with the highest acreage in Canada, will likely have a similar acreage to last years 83,600 acres. We estimate 84,000 acres as growers recover from a difficult year of lower production due to last year's drought. Available land for proper crop rotations is also a controlling acreage factor. Growers are just beginning to plant their potato crop as soil temperatures have been cool. Other rotational crops have been planted.

New Brunswick.

As the previously announced line capacity, is increased in one of the province's French fry plants, we anticipate acreage moving up to 53,000 acres to accommodate those contractual needs. NB had planted 52,900 acres in 2019 but had dropped back to 48,540 acres last year due to COVID-19 market reductions. Growers are just beginning to plant their crop now after having received significant levels of moisture this spring. Producers are also reeling from a disastrous dry year in 2020.

Quebec.

We are estimating Quebec growers will plant 46,000 acres, very similar to last year's 45,638 acres. Fresh acres in total, will likely be the same although there could be some shift from reds to yellows. Processing acres, especially for French fries could increase to meet contracted volume requirements for the local processor. Chip acres will likely be similar. Planting has been underway with many growers 15-20% complete, up to 40% finished. Soils have been warm but have cooled off recently.

Ontario.

Ontario is expected to plant 37,000 acres of potatoes this year. Last year saw a jump up to 36,500 acres with increases for both fresh potatoes and increased chip contracts. Both sectors should be similar this year. Spring conditions have been warm for some time with many producers in the southern region well along with their work or finished planting. Planting in the traditional storage region in the Alliston area is also progressing well.

Manitoba.

Manitoba should see substantial processing acreage increases to meet the final ramp up for their new French fry plant expansion in Portage LaPrairie. At this time UPGC is expecting acreages to reach 73,000. This would be up from 71,500 acres in 2019 but not likely sufficient to meet the needs of the new factory. The challenge is to find or convert over acres currently growing other crops into potatoes. Acreage for table potatoes will be similar to last year, however a difficult marketing season for reds will spearhead movement over to more yellow potatoes. Growers in both sectors are concerned about extremely dry conditions at planting time and very low water levels in reservoirs. Planting is about 70% complete and some growers are finished.

Saskatchewan.

Acreage estimate for Saskatchewan is expected to be the same as last year at 6,000 acres. The acreage is predominantly seed with some table production. Planting is about ten days earlier than normal.

Alberta.

Given that contract negotiations were only settled in Alberta last week, with some growers still waiting for volume commitments, it is very difficult to estimate planted acreage at this time. Our best guess is 61,000 acres which would be up from last year's 59,677 acres. Alberta's acreage decreased last year, from 61,235 acres in 2019, due to cutbacks of processor volumes as a result of COVID protocol in restaurants. Commercial growers will finish planting in the next day or so under very dry conditions. Seed growers have not yet begun planting their crop in the northern region. Table acreage should be similar to previous years, while the chip acreage will now be spread among three chip processors.

British Columbia.

UPGC estimates 2021 potato acreage in BC will be at 6,500 acres which is the same as 2020. Although the potato crop has been profitable in the province, there are always higher value fruit crops competing for the existing land base, making further expansion very costly. Growers have been planting for some time now and some are about 50% complete, allowing for good spacing between varietal maturities. Other growers have finished earlier than ever.

Good Luck to all Potato Growers in Planting Their 2021 Potato Crop!

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