



Crop Update August 19, 2021

The potato crop in Canada is now in the very critical growth stage of tuber bulking. Set has been determined and it is now this phase which will provide yield and determine production for this crop. While there is still considerable time left for many growing regions, the Canadian crop in mid-August appears to have good potential (in many but not all regions) to meet the needs of industry and rebound after reductions in yield and production experienced due to growing conditions in the previous two seasons. Early harvest of table, chip, and processing potatoes has begun in most provinces. A summary of crop progress from east to west follows:

Prince Edward Island:

The potato crop in PEI has experienced almost ideal growing conditions for the first 90-100 days of its growing season. The province received 130 plus mm of rainfall during the month of July, a welcome change from the drought of previous years. Growers will be monitoring lower areas of fields for good storage management. Excellent moisture allowed development of strong canopies, and subsequent sunshine in recent days has advanced the tuber bulking stage of the crop. Some growers feel their crop is a week to ten days ahead of normal maturity. Field digs and industry sampling point to a very good yield potential and size profile at this time. The crop will, however, need additional moisture to finish it out – it has now been 14 days since the last appreciable rain. Early harvest has begun, although the industry continues to run on old crop for both table and processing.

New Brunswick:

The overall health of the crop is good to excellent. The moisture level in the northern part of the province is dry to very dry, so timely moisture is still needed to finish the later maturing varieties.

Moisture levels in the southern area of the province have been better but will still need rain. The hot temperatures last week did stress the crop but with the large tuber set this year, yield potential is still very high. Early maturing varieties are settling down and harvest has begun on round whites with a good size profile and few smalls. Demand is lighter, but pricing has been good with paper 10's priced in the \$4.00-\$4.25 range. The later crop has a good set but needs to size up. Normally, early chip harvest would be in progress, but this year has not yet begun, due to a lack of contract with the chip company. French fry plants will start up production on August 27 and August 30. Friers are showing interest in purchasing open potatoes to cover possible shortfalls in their western production regions.

Quebec:

Although the growing season has been excellent earlier on, the excessive heat and dry conditions experienced lately have been stressing the crop. The early table harvest got off to a great start with potential for a high yielding crop, however later season varieties could be negatively impacted on both yield and size. Growers who have the ability to irrigate are busy doing so. The situation could still improve if rain comes in time, but the size profile of russets will be smaller than that of the earlier round whites. Early harvest of table, chip, and process potatoes has been underway, with yields average to slightly above average, and good quality. However, given the heat and dry conditions, the top has likely been taken off the russets. Demand for fresh potatoes is in its traditional lull due to excessive heat and consumers on vacation, however it should return when school is back in and people return to more normal lives. Demand for processed potatoes has been good and caught up to normal times.

Ontario:

The 2021 potato crop has enjoyed a nice growing season throughout the province. Some years would see large differentials in moisture levels and resulting yields from the southern Simcoe county to the northern parts of Dufferin county. This year, abundant rainfall has taken some of the pressure off long days of running irrigation systems. If anything, growers will need to be vigilant at harvest time to avoid bringing tubers in from lighter coloured and lower spots in fields which may have had a little too much water. The crop is advancing early with some growers looking at top killing a week to 10 days ahead of normal, allowing storage to proceed in a timely manner. Early table harvest has been ongoing for some time with good quality and yields reported. As in other areas, demand picks up with end of vacations and return to school schedules. Early chipstock harvest has been underway for three weeks now and continues like a well-oiled machine scheduling loads from one growing region to another, matching supply with the demand requirements in that sector.

Manitoba:

Fresh potato growing areas of the province have experienced the most severe drought in the province, with very hot and dry conditions. Many reservoirs in the Carmen and Winkler areas have been drained and yield is being substantially affected at this time. Current estimates are 50% of a normal crop. Rain is forecast for the weekend, but unfortunately many fields will not have the benefit of that moisture, as producers need to start top killing for harvest.

Processing

Temperatures are once again into the mid 30's this week. Stress from heat is beginning to show up in processing fields, particularly on varieties like Russet Burbank which are susceptible to early dying. Most reservoirs have run out of water but those drawing from the

aquifer or Assiniboine River have adequate water. Some rain (between half an inch to an inch) fell over the past week with more forecasted this week. Early harvest on Rangers began August 10th and matched or exceeded expectations for yield with good size profile. Old crop finished over the weekend, although Simplot is planning on bringing in additional crop from ND during this week.

Saskatchewan:

Despite the heat and drought this year, Saskatchewan has a very decent looking crop. Growers have been able to keep up with water demand using irrigation, which is expected to produce a better crop than the previous two years, in terms of both quality and yield. Crop stages are extremely varied due to the heat, and also smoke from wildfires. Top killing for seed started on August 10th and harvest should get going on the first of September. Growers report higher demand for seed than seen in many years with a shortage of red seed expected to bring strong prices.

Alberta:

The province received one inch of rain this week – the first in about two months. Hot temperatures are starting to cool off, but crop damage has already been done. The crops do look green and lush on top, but underneath is a very different story. Stress to the potato vines caused much of the crop to dump its first set of tubers and the second set created, is a very low one. Good weather will be needed until the end of September to make at best an average crop. Potentially, the yield could be off by 15%-20% with variable size profiles and quality. Early harvest has begun with yields for chips in the 12tons/acre range and yields for processing Rangers at 10-11tons/acre range. Demand for new crop is extremely high, but unfortunately the province is short on its ability to supply. Old crop and remaining inventory is empty.

British Columbia:

The province has had record setting heat since June 15th. Most growers have been able to keep water to the fields which should result in a good average yield but not like the one experienced last year. Early harvest has been going on for some time. Demand has been good, although there have been challenges to dig early in the day and get field heat out before packaging. Many fields are sprout nipped now and more than a normal number of fields being topped at this time.

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