



Harvest Update October 20, 2021

Potato harvest is in the final stages across the country. Most provinces (with the exception of British Columbia) have enjoyed excellent harvest conditions without cool temperatures or wet conditions. Yields have been below average in the west, above average in the Central provinces, and exceptional in the Eastern region. Here is a final update as the last spuds roll into storage for this season:

Prince Edward Island:

PEI growers have about 85% of their crop harvested and many expect to finish up this week. After two years of disappointing yields, this one is exceptional in terms of both tonnage, and quality. Yields will likely be in excess of 340cwt./acre in comparison to last year's 250 cwt./acre. One would need to go back to 2006 to find a similar production level for the province. Two large Hurricane events in early September were instrumental in bulking tubers at the end of the season. Harvest conditions have been excellent, bringing the crop in ahead of schedule. There will be a few unharvested acres where growers bypassed water damaged areas in poorly drained areas from the September rains.

New Brunswick:

Harvest in New Brunswick is mostly complete except for those growers short of storage or delivering out of field. Yields and quality have been outstanding, with some growers reporting their best on record, over many years of growing potatoes. Per acre yields are

estimated at 350cwt./acre compared to last year's devastating drought which brought only 237cwt./acre. Late rainfall was again key to bulking yield in maturing varieties and did create some spots in low lying areas which growers tried to leave. Harvest conditions have been very good and without cold temperatures. The resulting increase in 2021 production has attracted the interest of French fry processors who have already began moving loads out of the province on a westward journey to those regions that are deficient in their needed supply of potatoes.

Quebec:

Potato harvest in Quebec is almost complete. There are still some acres to be harvested yet, but they are mostly being dug, washed, and packed directly from the field, as most storages are full. Yields are above last year's 293cwt./acre, likely in the 300-310 range for most regions. Quality is also very nice, and the size profile ended up better than earlier anticipated. Harvesting conditions were ideal throughout the season, although temperatures were warmer than normal on some days and growers will keep a careful eye on those buildings. Any extra supply of processing potatoes should get picked up by the local processor. Demand on the fresh side has increased since school opened, and chain stores have done a good job of promoting potatoes over the last 5-6 weeks.

Ontario:

Ontario producers who grow potatoes for chips are about 95% complete of their harvest. Some growers have filled their storages for winter contracts and are stopped or waiting for field fry deliveries to clean up the rest of their crop. Tablestock producers are 90%-95% complete with their harvest but are in a similar situation with full buildings. Some are going to temporary storages while others are digging, washing, and packing out of the field. It is unusual there has been no frost or cold temperatures yet in the province, so this has

allowed good processing colour and good fresh quality to continue for out of field markets. It has been one of the better crops for many producers with well above average yields and nice size profiles. Soils have been plenty wet however, throughout the season and into the harvest schedule. Growers are apprehensive on some lots from damper conditions and will be leaning on better warehouses and ventilation systems to help them store the crop successfully.

Manitoba:

Processing. Harvest was 90% complete by October 1 with some growers delaying another week to allow further bulking. Most growers were complete by Thanksgiving weekend. Harvest conditions have been excellent with no frost or cold temperatures, in addition to some much-needed rain over the past three weeks. Warm temperatures were great for maintaining end colour for out of field deliveries but created some afternoon delays and stoppages with temperatures too hot to store. There is little to no unharvested acreage this year. Yield is variable depending on the growing region and availability of water. The growing season had 36 days with heat exceeding 30 degrees which trimmed overall yields. The heat is also attributed to quality issues such as more smalls, lower gravity, and sugar ends. A few early storage issues have developed resulting in early movement.

Fresh potato growers have now completed their harvest as well. Harvesting conditions went from very hot, to cooler last week as some growers delayed for skin set. Rainfall throughout the growing season was patchy resulting in yields 70%-80% of a normal year. Table quality is decent with a reasonable size profile however, due to the summer heat there is a full spectrum of sizes, as some varieties produced less tubers (but bigger ones), while other varieties did not size up. Table growers are now eager to make up the shortfall in yield with improved prices.

Saskatchewan:

Seed harvest was completed in the province by October 16th. Harvest conditions started out hot and dry, using irrigation water to soften clods. Conditions at the end became cooler as temperatures dipped to freezing at night. Crop yields are on par with a 3-yr average of 250cwt./acre with some growers reporting an additional 15% above that. Quality exceeds previous years with some seed surplus on certain varieties above contract.

Alberta:

Harvest for most growers was completed by October 12th with excellent digging conditions throughout the operation and no unharvested acres this season. Excessive heat reduced yields by 10%-15%, with process growers particularly hard hit. Yields one year ago were 404cwt./acre. Quality is all over the map, but the usual heat stress related issues are expected to be prevalent. The resulting supply is one that is short of what industry needs and would like to see for the upcoming months. Yields are also off in the northern seed growing region, however size profile and quality are very nice.

British Columbia:

Harvest for BC growers is complete except for those acres that were left out in wet ground. Digging conditions had been excellent for the first 80% of harvest until September 17th when the Pacific coast received several inches of rain. It has been a bit of a struggle for the last of the crop coming out with more heavy rain on September 27th, but growers dug all they could. Due to heat, yields are below last year's 332cwt./acre but similar to the 2019 crop. Growers without irrigation suffered larger reductions in their crop. The heat also created a slightly smaller size profile as well.

In summary, the 2021 growing season has provided a potato crop that is imbalanced across the country. There are areas short on supply which will need potatoes that are available from areas with additional supply. The differential will be based on freight and the logistics of moving this crop.

This is our final UPGC Crop Update of the season. We hope you have enjoyed following the progress of the potato crop from Seed to Storage across the country. Watch for our UPGC Summary after Statistics Canada releases their Estimate of Canadian Potato Production on December 7th.

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