

UNITED POTATO GROWERS OF CANADA

CROP UPDATE

OCTOBER, 2023

CANADIAN POTATO PRODUCTION – 2023 ESTIMATES

PROVINCE	Planted Acreage	ESTIMATED			PRODUCTION COMPARISON		
		Harvested Acreage	Yield	Production ('000 cwt)	2023 VS. 2022	2022	2021
PEI	83,500	81,413	320	26,052	-2.1%	26,600	27,209
NEW BRUNSWICK	53,000	50,880	300	15,264	-10.2%	17,000	18,200
NOVA SCOTIA	800	776	300	233	-3.0%	240	357
NEWFOUNDLAND	425	392	150	59	13.2%	52	55
TOTAL MARITIMES	137,725	133,461		41,608	-5.2%	43,892	45,821
QUEBEC	47,197	45,545	285	12,980	-12.6%	14,844	14,100
ONTARIO	37,700	36,695	230	8,440	3.4%	8,160	8,953
MANITOBA	81,000	78,975	355	28,036	7.3%	26,139	24,024
SASKATCHEWAN	7,300	7,285	240	1,748	20.6%	1,450	1,519
ALBERTA	80,000	78,000	405	31,590	17.8%	26,813	24,614
TOTAL PRAIRIES	168,300	164,260		61,375	12.8%	54,402	50,157
BRITISH COLUMBIA	5,200	5,148	335	1,725	7.8%	1,600	2,080
TOTAL CANADA	396,922	385,109	328	126,127	2.6%	122,898	121,111

With harvest complete through the western provinces and almost complete in the east, we felt it important to review our production forecast from last month. With recent developments in the processing sector (see US update on Page 2) UPGC has revised our production estimates downward from our September forecast. Based on weather for harvest in October for the eastern provinces, as well as acres taken out of production in the west, we feel overall production will be down close to 800 cwt from our earlier estimate, but still an increase of 2.6% over last year and the highest ever for the country.

Despite decreases in the east, fresh sector potatoes should be readily available for domestic markets as pricing pressure due to oversupply in the pacific northwest continues to impact our exports to the US.

PEI has been fighting rain and now snow as they attempt to get the last few thousand acres into storage. Although not behind schedule as the province traditionally goes right out to Halloween, there has been some difficulty in the second half of the month getting into the fields. There some concerns about storability as most of what is left to harvest are the Burbanks which have now been subject to the most water, growers will be keeping a close eye throughtout the winter.

The situation is similar in neighbouring New Brunswick, although much closer to finishing harvest they have had the same wet conditions as PEI and Quebec throughout the growing season, with many saying that the first three weeks of the month made the entire difference in the crop this year. This same great weather for harvest was enjoyed in Quebec as well, who are now close to finished harvesting the storage crop. Issues of hollow heart that were seen in the russets in New Brunswick were also seen in Quebec, mostly in the processing sector. The reds and yellows have faired much better in the province with reports of good quality. Storage so far is going well but there are concerns of potential losses over the winter.

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Ontario started off with a similar wet and rainy June and July, but did not experience the heavy rainfall seen in Quebec evidenced in the good crop this year. There were greater than average yields in the province and harvest conditions were decent for the most part, however many growers are expecting a higher gradeout and potential issues with storage due to some wet conditions in the later weeks of harvest.

After a very hot and dry start to the growing season in Manitoba July and August were a bit better as temperatures moderated. In the mostly irrigated processing sector fields the yields were very good and within a couple of weeks of the start of harvest there were calls from growers looking for storage. This oversupply, along with damaged fields from hail storms, is unfortunately resulting in growers abandoning up to 2000 acres in the province. The fresh sector in Manitoba is reporting a very good crop considering that most of the reds and yellows are on dryland. Irrigated fields are noting very good yields, but the sector as a whole is estimating an average crop overall.

In Saskatchewan, the seed crop has done very well, despite a very hot May, as with Manitoba the weather improved through the season. Dryland areas may be below the 3 year average however the irrigated fields are forecasting an excellent crop.

It is important to note that all seed areas across the country are reporting very good crops this year, even in Quebec who was the hardest hit with precipitation, the seed sector further north was not as hard hit.

Alberta had an extremely dry year, going on three years now of drought like conditions, reporting that irrigation supply was empty for the first time at the end of the growing season. They will need a good snow pack or may face allocation next year. Despite these conditions there was a very good crop and unfortunately Alberta is also caught up in the oversupply situation in the processing sector in the Pacific Northwest and processors will not be taking all of the potatoes coming out of the ground in the province this year. In British Columbia, despite no more than 2 inches of rain from May through to September, growers have reported an excellent crop and the bins are full. Although below the 5 year average, production estimates for 2023 are greater than the last two years.

RETAIL ADS CANADA

Ads were up in October for Russets and Creamers, down for round whites and reds, and stable for yellows when compared to September

Prices for a 10 lb bag were averaging \$5.38 for russets, \$6.16 for reds, \$4.66 for yellows and \$4.45 for whites for all ads across Canada.

US PROCESSING CROP

In a recent interview with Dale Lathim, President of the PMANA, we have learned about the oversupply situation in the Pacific Northwest. "It's been a better year for Northwest french-fry-making potatoes than the last couple of years – too good in fact. Lathim said farmers eagerly planted more spuds this year than last. That all totals up to a big potato glut. Now, massive amounts of spuds must be destroyed: 165,000 tons of them. The tubers are from Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Alberta. Lathim said the industry has had two years of shortages but this year farmers overblew the hole by growing an additional 55,000 acres. In Lathim's 30 years in the industry, he said he has never seen anything like it. Of the 55,000 acres, only about 5,000 acres of potatoes total will be destroyed – that's because the pipeline was so empty. But it's still a huge amount of spuds. This problem will likely carry over to next year's farmers' woes. That's because 10% more potatoes from this year will be used next year by major potato processors – the companies have already warned growers they will have to cut back an additional 10% in 2024.

EUROPEAN UPDATE

From mainland Europe, the news is mixed. Belgium and France are reporting promising yields. In fact, French yields are shining bright, showing a 10.2% increase compared to the previous year. However, Holland's yields are trailing behind Belgium's. The Dutch crop has been plagued with quality issues, including mishaps, pink rot, and blight. Over in Germany, some storage facilities have already had to unload their stock due to "breakdown" issues. In Ireland, the same weather conditions that have boosted sales have also brought challenges. Harvesting activities have come to a standstill due to adverse weather. Fields across the region are grappling with widespread flooding, leading to waterlogged conditions. This has raised concerns about potential losses in the crop yield. Similar conditions have been seen in the UK.



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