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SUGAR BEET GROWING IN GERMANY

La culture de betteraves sucrières en Allemagne / Der deutsche Zuckerrübenanbau

ABSTRACT

In Germany, about 31,000 farmers grow sugar beet on an area of 360,000 hectares (3% of the total agricultural crop area). Their beet is mainly used for sugar production, but also for bioethanol, biogas and industrial purposes. Since the restructuring over the last decade, only 20 sugar factories are now left today.

The interests of German beet growers are represented by regional beet growers' associations. They are members of one out of three umbrella organisations, which conduct the negotiations with the German sugar companies on sugar beet prices, as well as on contract and delivery conditions. Other activities of these umbrella organisations, like political representation, research activities and public relations, are coordinated by the Working Group of the German Sugar Beet Growers Organisations (ADR). The ADR forms the interface between beet growers and the German Farmers Association (DBV). Furthermore, the grower's organisations are members of other German, European and international associations in order to promote the interests of German beet growers more strongly.

Sugar beet growing in Germany is subject to structural changes: The growing area and number of beet growers are decreasing. Productivity, though, follows an increasing trend. Within the last few years, sugar yields have risen continuously from about 8.5 tons per hectare ten years ago, to about 11.5 tons per hectare in the last campaign. On the other hand side, nitrogen input has been reduced and is now spread at an optimum of about 100 kg per hectare and year.

Mulch sowing has become a more widespread trend in German beet growing. In 2012, for the first time, more area was mulch sown than by ploughing before sowing. Wheat is the dominant crop rotated with sugar beet. Catch crops are sown on 40% of the German sugar beet area. With regards to plant protection, about five applications of pesticides are used per year. This number has risen slightly since 2005, due to an increasing pressure to fight fungal infections.

Harvesting and logistics have also become increasingly efficient and most of the growers are members of harvesting and transport organisations with 6-row harvesters now being used almost everywhere. In all growing areas, growers are contractually bound to use clamp covering from the beginning of December onwards.