

Early EU25 estimates for 2005 : fall in both the area under crops and production

Statistics in focus

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

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According to estimates by Eurostat and the initial estimates submitted by the Member States at the beginning of June, there will be a slight decrease in the area under major crops in 2005. In addition to this, yields will be heavily affected by the poor weather conditions observed in some parts of the EU, thus leading to a sharp fall in production in comparison to admittedly exceptional, year 2004. Thus production returned to the level of the average observed over the last seven years.

Cereals: decrease in surface area to 51.9 million hectares (-1.2%) 2005 harvest estimated at 259.3 million tonnes in EU25

With the set-aside rate back at 10%, the EU25 area under cereals is expected to decrease in comparison to 2004. Partly as a consequence of this, it is anticipated that there will be a 10.5% decrease in cereals production in EU25 to 259.3 mn tonnes, in comparison to 289.6 mn tonnes in 2004. The EU15 is expected to produce 204.1 mn tonnes and the ten new Member States 55.2 mn tonnes. Part of this fall in production can also be attributed to unfavourable weather conditions (e.g. drought in the Mediterranean region) triggering a drop in yield. A sharp decrease in production should therefore become evident in the major cereal-producing countries: France (66 mn tonnes, -6.3%), Germany (47.5 mn tonnes, -7%), Italy (18 mn tonnes, -15.8%) and Spain (16 mn tonnes, -31.2%).

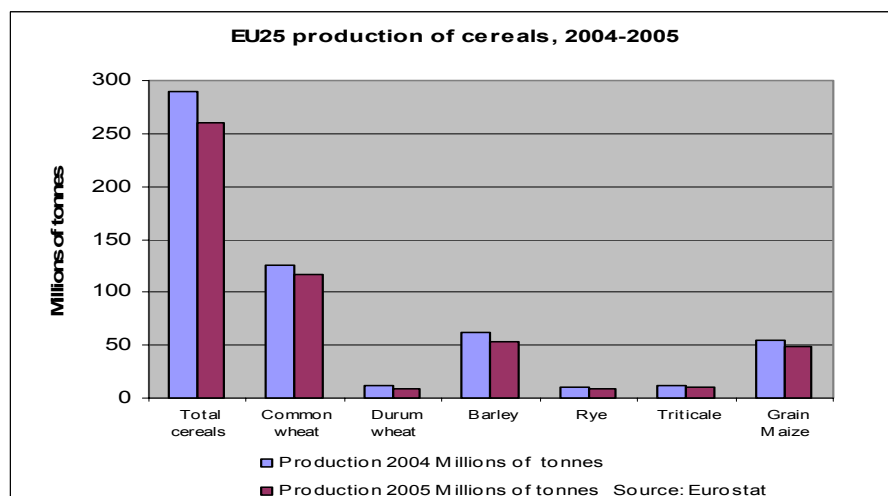
Although the area under common wheat is expected to increase by 1.4% to reach 19.5 mn hectares, production is forecast to fall by 6.7% to 116.7 mn tonnes.

The area under durum wheat is anticipated to show a decrease of 10.5% (down to 3.6 mn hectares), due in part to a significant fall in the cropping area in Italy (1.5 mn hectares, -17%). EU25 production is estimated at a total of 8.9 mn tonnes.

The area sown with barley would appear relatively stable (12.8 mn hectares, -0.8%), whereas barley production is expected to drop by 13.3% to an estimated 53.4 mn tonnes. Germany is still expected to be the largest producer with 11.8 mn tonnes (-9.3%). Spain will suffer a spectacular decrease of 40% (6.4 mn tonnes) due to drought.

Poland is forecast to remain the main producer of rye with a surface area of 1.5 mn hectares and an expected harvest of 3.6 mn tonnes (-14.8%), while Germany will register a surface area of 0.6 mn hectares associated with an estimated production of 3 mn tonnes (-20.7%).

Finally, it is anticipated that the area under grain maize will drop by 4.4% to 6.2 mn hectares.



Increase in the area under rape to 4.6 million hectares (+3.5%) in EU25

As the biofuel Directive advocates an increase in the use of biofuels such as biodiester produced from rape, the area under rape is forecast to increase by 3.5%, i.e. more than 155 000 hectares (+19.5% for the United Kingdom*, +16.3% for Hungary and +14.3% for Slovakia). However, production will decrease by an estimated 7% to a figure of 14.1 mn tonnes.

The area under sugar beet is expected to decrease slightly (-1.9%). The harvest forecast for sugar beet is 114.9 mn tonnes (i.e. a 11.4% decrease). While France, the largest producer, is expected to produce 29.5 mn

tonnes (-3.6%), Spain will see its beet production drop to 1.8 mn tonnes, i.e. a decrease of 72.5%.

The reduction of 8.4% in the acreage of potatoes (to an expected surface area of 2mn hectares) is partially due to the low producer price following the abundant harvest in 2004. Potato production is estimated at 60.6 mn tonnes. Germany (11.6 mn tonnes), with a lower surface area but higher yield, is expected to be ahead of Poland, where the production estimate is 11.3 mn tonnes.

* Eurostat estimate

Further information:

Databases

[EUROSTAT Website/Agriculture, forestry and fisheries/Agriculture/Agricultural products/Crops products](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&code=3220202)

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