



World Association of Beet and Cane Growers



## NEWS FROM WABCG

JANUARY 2021

### EDITORIAL

What a year we have just had! About everything has been said about this year...



So, let's try to be a little bit original and focus on the good things 2020 offered us!

- Our industries, all around the world, proved once again how important it is for consumption, but also for health. Ethanol, used in hydro-alcoholic gel and made thanks to our sugar beet and sugarcane, saved

thousands of lives this year, and we can be really proud of that!

- Farmers showed once again how committed they are, working everyday as always, to make the Earth provide the best it can make, despite Covid-19.

- The sugar market was eventually resilient. After this crazy year, raw sugar is now almost at 16 ct/lb: a 4 year high – who could have guessed that last Spring when it went under 10 cts/lb?

- Innovation spread around the world, in economy (this year we had a bright example in the UK, where the beet price is now indexed to futures), in outlets (ethanol production from our crops is at a highest in many parts of the world, including India) as well as in agronomy.

- And even at WABCG, we inaugurated a new way to meet, on the Web that opened out to us a new way to work.

I may be an optimist, but this is often the case for farmers. We know that, after the rain, the sun is here! So, let's try to see 2021 with optimism: I wish you all a very happy 2021!

**Eduardo Romão, President  
WABCG**

*Happy new year!*



Virtual London, November 2020

*See you in 2021!*

*Virtual Australia: Monday 7<sup>th</sup>, Monday 14<sup>th</sup> and Monday 21<sup>st</sup> June  
London (United Kingdom): Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> November*



## NEWS FROM FRANCE :

2020 was a disastrous year for French beet growers. Approximately 421,000 ha were harvested this year, at a yield below 65 t of sugar beet per hectare, a level that had not been seen for almost 20 years! The warm winter caused a massive aphid attack on beet that was not protected by neonics as it used to be in the past. These aphids inoculated yellow virus into the beet, already weakened by severe drought.



**In some parts of France, growers lost more than half their production. And, at the level of my country, almost 1.5 Mt of sugar was lost!**

The only good news is that after years of inertia for our sector, the French Ministry of agriculture realised the extent of the crisis and decided to give the sector three additional years to find alternatives to neonics. The sector will allocate 20 M€ (of which 7 M€ via public funds) to a vast research plan, in order to be able to take up this new challenge.

On a wider scale, the example we had in France shows the difficulties farmers have to face in Europe, when impossible targets are fixed by legislators, without adequate support.

The European Commission has an ambitious roadmap, called Green Deal, for the next decades. Its implementation in the agricultural sector includes a 50% reduction in chemical pesticides and a 20% reduction in fertilisers. **These targets, nowadays, are hardly attainable without a strong support in research and innovation, and we will fight to obtain a large innovation plan in order to implement it.** But, in any case, this cannot be achieved locally if the European Union continues to import goods that are produced without the same target. **This is why this Green Deal is supposed to include a revision of the Trade policy, in order to avoid unfair competition for European producers on their own land.**

I am confident that we will succeed. Sugar beet is a crop with tremendous potential to help Europe mitigate its carbon emissions. Ethanol, which represents the outlet for almost 25% of our sugar beet in France, has a crucial role to play in this.

But, for this to be possible, we need to attract growers to this crop. In the short term, this can only be done via beet prices. And, regarding this point, **the European sector has to amplify its work on risk mitigation but also, simply, on market adaptation.**

We are appalled by the lack of reactivity of European sugar prices, which up to now remain below the recovery price, although the level of production will be at the average of what it was under the quota regime. As long as it remains like that, it will be difficult for growers to consider sugar beet as an attractive crop – particularly since the prices of alternative crops today are increasing.

To conclude, if 2020 has been a very challenging year, no doubt 2021 will be another one!

**Pierre RAYE, CEO**

*Confédération Générale des planteurs de Betteraves  
(CGB, Association of French Beet Growers), France*

**The latest study made by WABCG  
is now available, only for members!**

*"Growers' associations around the world:  
Who are we, and what do we do?"*

**Save the dates!**

**Virtual Australia:**

Monday, 7 June 2021: 'Around the World'  
Monday, 14 June 2021: 'The Australian sugar sector'  
Monday, 21 June 2021: 'Private session'

**WABCG/ISO Consultation, London (UK)**

Monday, 22 November 2021