NEWS FROM WABCG

JANUARY 2026

EDITO

At this time of year, it is always a pleasure to exchange good wishes!

It is an opportunity to reflect on what can bring joy to others, what can contribute to a happier life, and to rise above the general climate of uncertainty of our times, in which international tensions seem to increase day by day. It is also an invitation to openness: to better understand one another and to support each other in our ambitions.

This approach fully reflects the spirit of the WABCG, our association, which seeks to bring together beet and cane growers from across the world, guided by a sense of solidarity and a family spirit that can sometimes be lacking in today's world.

For this reason, I would like to underline the importance of preserving this spirit of family among all members of the WABCG throughout the year 2026. May this spirit, so naturally present at the beginning of the year, continue to inspire and sustain us in the months ahead. May it be reflected in our upcoming meetings, in June in Sweden and in December in the United Kingdom, as well as in all our exchanges throughout the year.

To each and every one of you, and also to your families and colleagues, **I extend my very best wishes for a happy and successful year 2026!**

Owen Menkens, President
WABCG

Happy new year!

Cairns, Australia, June 2025

London, UK, December 2025

See you in 2026

Helsingborg (Sweden): 15-18 June
London (United-Kingdom): 30 November

News from France

We are finishing our 2025 campaign with an average yield of around 91 t/ha at 16°. This is good news: after years of disappointing yields, we are finally above our olympic yield — which had fallen by almost 9 tonnes over seven years. But this year again, national average masks major disparities, with yellow virus notably impacting certain plots, particularly in Champagne and Île-de-France, where losses can reach 50%. On the opposite, some plots in Nord–Pas-de-Calais recorded historic yields, exceeding 140 t/ha at 16°!

It must be said that the climate was exceptional throughout the campaign. The potential was there: in Belgium, where acetamiprid is authorised to fight aphids that transmit yellow virus, the average yield stands at 104 t/ha! A clear illustration of the impact of differences in access to means of production… In France, despite our National Research and Innovation Programme on viral yellows (PNRI-C), we do not yet have an operational and economically viable solution at this stage. This is all the more problematic given that our costs per hectare have increased by more than 30% over five years and still exceed €2,900/ha.

In this context, protecting our markets becomes an existential issue. A collective response is needed: in 2025 we once again experienced restructuring, with the closure of the Ouvré factory and the sale of the Lesaffre factory to Cristal Union, marking the end of the privately owned family industrial model in France. This turning point reveals the inability of single-plant structures to absorb market volatility and international competition, with an increasing share of the risk being passed on to growers — who are no longer able to absorb it.

This is also why we firmly oppose Free-Trade Agreements which would include concessions made to sugar and ethanol, and why we are drawing attention to the potential consequences of Ukraine’s accession to the European Union, given the differences between our production models.

Indeed: the viability of the French sugar beet production model, based on family farms, is now under threat. This model has demonstrated its resilience and capacity for diversification, as well as its sustainability and environmental performance. However, this model is challenged when confronted with more integrated production systems, with which it is not in a position to compete, including on its own domestic market.

In response to this situation, the CGB supports a clear approach in view of CAP 2028: reintroducing ambition in the management of agricultural markets, which has been neglected for too long. We propose updating reference thresholds and automating existing instruments, such as private storage, to be deployed in coordination with the bioethanol sector, while allowing for the suspension of imports when they undermine value on the domestic market. The survival of our agricultural model is now at stake.

Guillaume Gandon, Vice-President
CGB (Confédération Générale des Planteurs de Betteraves), France

News from Southern GERMANY

The 2025 growing season once again posed major challenges for sugar beet cultivation in southern Germany, but at the same time brought noticeable progress in key problem areas.

Weather: Good start, increasing stress in summer

The start of the growing season in 2025 was mostly favorable. Early sowing from the end of February to the second half of March enabled good field emergence. Late frosts in mid-March were limited to certain regions and caused only minor damage. The pronounced drought in spring had a much more significant impact. It was not until widespread rainfall at the end of May that the crops stabilized and were able to quickly catch up on their growth deficit. However, heavy rainfall caused yield losses in some regions.

The dry weather continued in some regions during the summer, increasing stress on beet crops. Nevertheless, many crops were able to largely secure their yield potential thanks to early row closure and good early development.

Progress in the fight against SBR and Stolbur

A key issue in 2025 was the ongoing fight against the Syndrome Basses Richesses (SBR) and Stolbur disease. The work of the SBR Task Force, which has been active since 2023, showed clear measurable success for the first time. In several model regions, integrated strategies combining crop rotation adjustments, targeted insecticide use, plant strengthening, and variety selection stabilized both yields and sugar content.

A milestone was the timely granting of emergency approvals (derogation) for insecticides to combat the planthopper Pentastiridius leporinus. The correct timing of applications based on nationwide cross-crop planthopper monitoring proved to be crucial. Early treatments showed clear advantages over late interventions.

The SBR summit in Offenau in October 2025, attended by representatives from industry, politics, research, and agricultural practice, made it clear that control measures are evolving from pure damage limitation to greater cultivation security. At the same time, it became clear that integrated measures and political support remain indispensable until resistant varieties are available.

2025 campaign: Higher sugar content, regional differences

The 2025 sugar beet campaign started in September under predominantly favorable conditions. Dry and mild weather facilitated harvesting, even though heavy rainfall and the first frosts in late autumn led to regional interruptions. Overall, the harvest was largely completed by the end of November.

The increase in sugar content compared to the previous year was encouraging. While historically low values were recorded in 2024, the average values in 2025 were significantly higher again in many places. In regions without SBR, values of over 18 percent were achieved in some cases, while in affected areas the level remained below this, but also showed a positive trend. Depending on the region, sugar content ranges from below 16 percent to above 18 percent. The decisive factors here are favorable growing conditions, lower Cercospora infestation and, in SBR regions, the effective use of insecticides. At 110 to 140 days, the campaign was shorter than in the previous year, which was also due to the good quality of the beets.

Market adjustment bonus: response to full wareh ouses

The decent yields from the 2025 beet harvest are meeting with a weak global market and high stock levels. Falling sugar prices and a saturated market pose major challenges for growers and industry. Rising import volumes into the EU from Ukraine and the Mercosur countries, higher EU production volumes, and lower sugar consumption caused a significant drop in prices on the EU internal market. To avoid even greater economic losses, Südzucker and the southern German growers' associations responded with a clear course correction for 2026 and appealed to their growers to reduce the contracted areas for 2026 by at least 15 percent. The incentive for this is a market adjustment bonus of ten euros per ton of reduced contract beets, provided that cultivation continues in 2027. The aim is to temporarily adjust supply in order to stabilize the market without permanently jeopardizing regional value creation.

75 years of SZVG

Nevertheless, there was still a reason to celebrate in 2025: the 75th anniversary of the South German Sugar Beet Processing Cooperative (SZVG). The SZVG was founded in 1950 because farmers wanted to move beyond their role as mere suppliers of raw materials and participate more in value creation and decision-making. For 75 years, it has pooled the financial resources of farmers, who have acquired a majority stake in Südzucker AG through the continuous provision of capital. The interests of the farmer shareholders are represented at the annual general meeting of Südzucker AG.

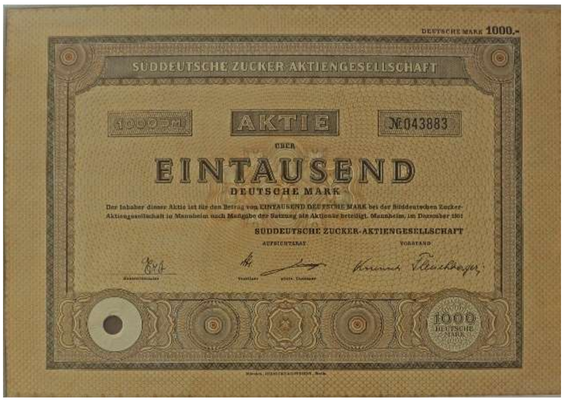
Conclusion

Sugar beet cultivation in southern Germany in 2025 was marked by challenges, but also by important progress. In particular, the fight against SBR has seen its first solid successes. At the same time, extreme weather and volatile markets show how important adaptability, research, and joint action remain. 2025 can thus be seen as a year of cautious optimism – with clear tasks for the coming years.

Paul-Martin Pfeuffer, Executive Director,
Verband Süddeutscher Zuckerrübenanbauer (VSZ)
Germany

SBR Summit in Offenau in the model region of the SBR Task Force. Source: Christine Weißenberger

Impression from the SBR Task Force research in Bavaria on September 1, 2025. The strong yellow coloration of the untreated area due to SBR infection is clearly visible. The areas in the middle and on the left were threatened with insecticides, biostimulants and leaf fertilizer. Source: Achim Jesser



One of the first Südzucker shares from 1951. 1950 the Süddeutsche Zuckerrübenverwertungs-Genossenschaft (SZVG) was founded as representative of beet growers in South Germany. Source: Christine Weißenberger

News from Denmark

2025 has been a positive growing season in Denmark, with early sowing and a good mix of rain and sun throughout the season. The yield has looked very promising during the entire season, and the result may very well end up close to our record yield from 2014. But – like we say, "don't sell the bear's skin before you've caught the bear".

We have started the campaign on the 23rd of September. Due to the high yields and several problems in our two sugar factories during the campaign, we expect the campaign to finish in the beginning of February. The last beets are lifted in the period from the middle of November until the 10th of December, and there is a huge risk for the quality of the beet in the clamps.

We had fairly high temperatures in December and warm conditions for the beets in the clamps. And now – since the beginning of January – we have witnessed a completely turnaround with snow and frost. The beets in the claps are covered with TopTex, but it is not sufficient when the temperatures drop below minus 3-5 degrees Celsius. The beets at the foot of the clamp are at a higher risk of being harmed, as the lowest 40-50 cm are not covered due to the way the TopTex is fastened in the clamp.

The factories in Denmark accept frozen beet and recently thawed beets, but they do not accept damaged beets – neither those damaged because of too warm conditions nor those affected by rot after having been frozen.

So, for now, we cross our fingers that the temperature remains low until the end of the campaign and that the factories will finally run at a high and stable speed during the last month of the campaign.

In October, we reached an agreement with our processor regarding the contract and price conditions for 2026. The sugar price in the EU has dropped by at least 35% since the summer of 2024, and there is plenty of sugar in stock. The current low sugar price and low prices for alternative crops such as wheat, malting barley and rapeseed have also put significant pressure on the beet price.

So, like most countries in the EU, we are facing a lower beet price in 2026 compared to the price in 2025, as well as a lower beet area in 2026.

At the same time, we are struggling with more restrictions on our use of pesticides in beet farming and agriculture in general. Today, we are left with very few alternatives, and it does not stop here – and there are no new pesticides coming up to replace the old ones.

After a warm month of December, the weather has turned around with snow and frost since the beginning of January. With an expected late finishing campaign at the beginning of February, there is a risk of ending up with damaged beets in the clamps before the campaign is over.

Troels Frandsen, President,
Danish Beet Growers, Denmark