NEWS FROM WABCG

APRIL 2026

EDITO

Current events leave little room for respite, and every day brings its own share of news. Our sector is no exception, and it is surprising how heavily the prices at which a farmer on one side of the globe buys inputs and sells produce depend on events on the other side of the globe.
This is precisely why I value the association that I chair: it helps us to stay the course when everything around us is changing and pushing us to rush into things.

Let's keep our cool, share our thoughts and compare ideas. By sharing our knowledge, we can ensure that our actions are based on sound evidence. This is why we have just finalised a study exploring the feasibility of compensating growers for providing data relating to their farming practices. I invite you to read it so that we can compare our perspectives and broaden our thinking. Please feel free to contact the Secretariat at any time: this association is yours!

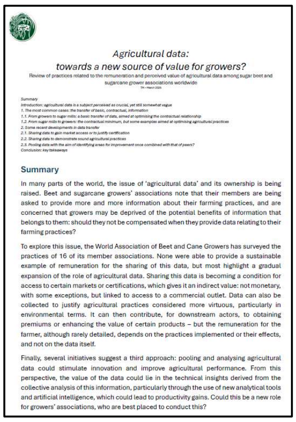
Our next meeting will be held in Helsingborg, Sweden, at the invitation of Betodlarna. There, we will have the opportunity to discuss our challenges and issues once again.

We have already received registrations from 48 of you, spanning 17 countries. A reminder to those who have not yet registered: there is still time!

Owen Menkens, President
WABCG

A new study from WABCG

Agricultural data:
towards a new source of value for growers?



Agricultural data:
towards a new source of value for growers?
Review of practices related to the remuneration and perceived value of agricultural data among sugar beet and sugarcane grower associations worldwide

Summary
Introduction: agricultural data is a subject perceived as crucial, yet still somewhat vague
1. The most common cases: the transfer of basic, contractual, information
1.1. From growers to sugar mills: a basic transfer of data, aimed at optimising the contractual relationship
1.2. From sugar mills to growers: the contractual minimum, but some examples aimed at optimising agricultural practices
2. Some recent developments in data transfer
2.1. Sharing data to gain market access or to justify certification
2.2. Sharing data to demonstrate sound agricultural practices
2.3. Pooling data with the aim of identifying areas for improvement once combined with that of peers?
Conclusion: key takeaways

Summary

In many parts of the world, the issue of 'agricultural data' and its ownership is being raised. Beet and sugarcane growers' associations note that their members are being asked to provide more and more information about their farming practices, and are concerned that growers may be deprived of the potential benefits of information that belongs to them: should they not be compensated when they provide data relating to their farming practices?

To explore this issue, the World Association of Beet and Cane Growers has surveyed the practices of 16 of its member associations. None were able to provide a sustainable example of remuneration for the sharing of this data, but most highlight a gradual expansion of the role of agricultural data. Sharing this data is becoming a condition for access to certain markets or certifications, which gives it an indirect value: not monetary, with some exceptions, but linked to access to a commercial outlet. Data can also be collected to justify agricultural practices considered more virtuous, particularly in environmental terms. It can then contribute, for downstream actors, to obtaining premiums or enhancing the value of certain products – but the remuneration for the farmer, although rarely detailed, depends on the practices implemented or their effects, and not on the data itself.

Finally, several initiatives suggest a third approach: pooling and analysing agricultural data could stimulate innovation and improve agricultural performance. From this perspective, the value of the data could lie in the technical insights derived from the collective analysis of this information, particularly through the use of new analytical tools and artificial intelligence, which could lead to productivity gains. Could this be a new role for growers' associations, who are best placed to conduct this?

The issue of 'agricultural data' and its ownership is being raised: should growers be compensated when they provide data relating to their farming practices? To explore this issue, the WABCG has surveyed the practices of 16 of its member associations – and here are the results!

Ask the Secretariat to receive a copy!

Next WABCG meeting
16-18 June 2026
Helsingborg, Sweden

The World Association of Beet and Cane Growers (WABCG) is the international organisation which groups together the national and regional associations of sugar beet and sugar cane growers at international level. WABCG has 37 member associations and unites over 5 million sugar beet and sugar cane growers from the five continents. WABCG is present in over 30 countries, producing 60% of world sugar production.

www.wabcg.org

News from Japan

Sugar beet cultivation in Japan is conducted exclusively in Hokkaido. In recent years, however, the progression of climate warming has led to an increase in the immigration of long-distance migratory insect pests, resulting in more severe crop damage. The beet webworm (*Spoladea recurvalis*) has historically migrated periodically to Hokkaido and has at times caused substantial damage. In 2025, however, the beet armyworm (*Spodoptera exigua*) was confirmed in Hokkaido for the first time.

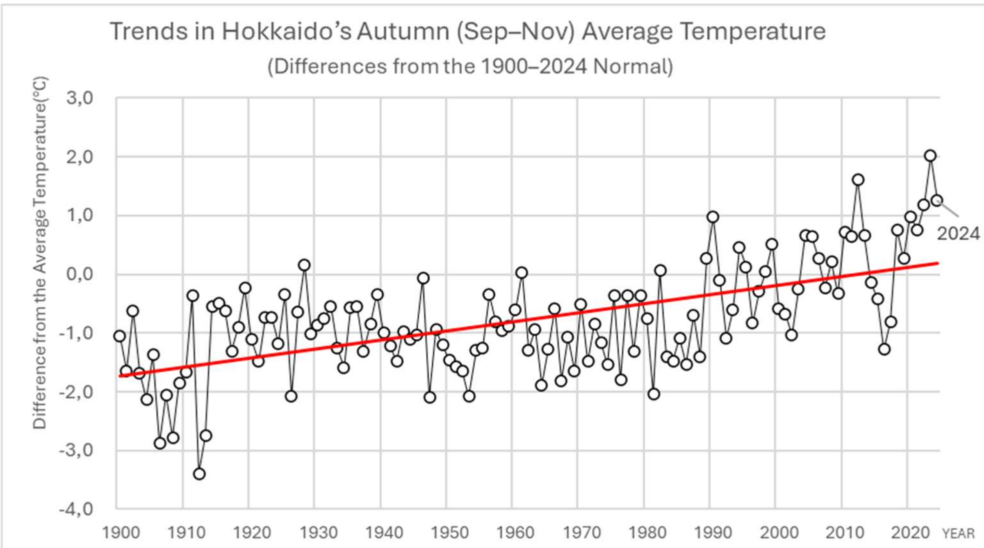
Beet armyworm : larva & adult

On Honshu, frequent outbreaks of this pest on vegetable crops have been reported since around 2016, and damage is now observed across almost the entire region. Consequently, its eventual migration to Hokkaido had been anticipated. In fact, in 2025, damage was also confirmed in Aomori Prefecture, located only approximately 20 km across the sea from Hokkaido. Depending on future outbreak trends on Honshu, there is growing concern that widespread infestations may also occur in Hokkaido.

Control of these pests is challenging because the number of insecticides with high efficacy is limited due to issues related to insecticide susceptibility. In addition, depending on the timing of outbreaks, additional control costs may be unavoidable. Under these circumstances, it is essential to establish a sustainable pest management system that prevents the development of resistance, including strict adherence to insecticide rotation. Continuous and long-term efforts in this regard will be required.

For the 2025 sugar beet crop, yield reached 66.6 t/ha, while sugar content was 15.6%. In recent years, temperatures have remained consistently high as a result of climate change, and the rise in minimum temperatures, particularly during the autumn period, is considered to have suppressed sugar accumulation. Furthermore, Cercospora, which tends to occur frequently under hot and humid conditions, is another factor contributing to reduced sugar content, making effective countermeasures an urgent priority.

In 2025, following the previous season, the incidence of Cercospora was successfully suppressed through the thorough implementation of early control measures and an increase in the number of fungicide applications. Such efforts must be maintained and further strengthened in the future. On the other hand, given that the impact of Cercospora has been mitigated to some extent through these control measures, it is considered that recent declines in sugar content are primarily attributable to climate change.



The sugar beet cultivated area in Hokkaido continues to decline due to a combination of factors, including rising prices of fertilizers and agrochemicals, increasing instability in productivity caused by climate change, labor shortages associated with an aging farming population, and the increased frequency and cost of pest and disease control. These challenges have led to a decline in producers' motivation to continue cultivation.

Nevertheless, sugar is an essential staple in the human diet, and sugar beet is a key crop supporting crop rotation systems in Hokkaido agriculture. In addition, the sugar manufacturing industry plays a significant role in the regional economy. Against this backdrop, local communities, producers, and the sugar industry are working collaboratively to secure sugar beet planting areas and maintain stable sugar production.

Shun KUBOTA, Manager, Sugar Beet & Seed Section
HOKUREN Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives, Japan

News from Belgium

The year 2025 will be remembered in Belgium as exceptional for sugar beet cultivation. Ideal weather and soil conditions, strong varieties, and advanced farming techniques resulted in historic yields and remarkably stable and high sugar content. For both growers and processors, this record year offered a rare moment of relief in a context marked by rising costs and increasing market volatility. Record year 2025 showed us the potential of sugar beet varieties: high yields (up to 130 tonnes/ha) and average high sugar content well above 18%. That is promising for the future, to produce sugar even more efficiently.

Yet while 2025 showcased the sector's resilience and potential, 2026 marks a sharp turning point. Belgian sugar beet growers now face one of the most significant structural adjustments in recent decades: a mandatory 25% reduction for Raffinerie Tirlemontoise growers. This measure, lets's hope for just one year, driven by market pressure, contractual constraints, and industrial and storage capacity consideration, has immediate consequences for crop planning, farm profitability, and interprofessional dynamics. RT, part of the German Südzucker group, stands for 2/3 of the Belgian sugar production. At the second belgian processor, Iscal Sugar, sowing is requested to be "moderate," without the obligation of imposed negative percentages on the growers. The sugar sales of the family-owned processor Iscal are situated primarily on the domestic market, meaning they experience fewer problems caused by the turbulent global market.

The extraordinary yields of 2025 raised expectations across the sector, but it is clear that such performance cannot be considered the new baseline, thoug it might be our new goal. The area reduction imposed for 2026 forces many farmers to rethink their rotations and seek alternative crops in markets that are themselves under pressure. Potatoes, flax, and vegetables are not an option for these growers. Those markets are also struggling, and the market disruption caused by geopolitical developments is being felt right down to our fields. It seems corn and fallow land are an option…

For the processing industry in Belgium, lower volumes also pose challenges in terms of efficiency and competitiveness. Maintaining the delicate balance between sufficient supply and economic viability becomes increasingly complex, reinforcing the need for stable long-term agreements.

For many arable farmers in the southern part of Belgium, the RT-region, the reduction means that sugar beet, traditionally a stable and technically rewarding crop, temporarily loses ground in the cropping plan. The key question becomes how the sector can stabilise or lift the area in the medium term without undermining growers' economic resilience.

Belgium has a long tradition of strong interprofessional negotiation and cooperation, but 2026 puts this model to the test. The area reduction, combined with geopolitical uncertainty and logistical disruptions, increased tension between our growers' organisation in the RT-region and the processor. Despite the difficult situation regarding acreage reduction, both parties quickly came together around the table to look towards the future. The growers want to contribute to the maximum preservation of cultivation in Belgium, knowing that we are situated in the middle of the "beet belt" in Europe and that we are also in the heart of the European consumer market. Add to that our very fertile soil and the expertise of the growers, and you know that it is best to preserve Belgian sugar beet cultivation to produce, process, and commercialize efficiently. The "all-time record year" 2025 has already shown us the way in terms of cultivation and production.

In this environment, three elements become essential for us, CBB:

- Transparency regarding market outlooks, contract conditions, and risk factors
- Balanced agreements that safeguard both industrial continuity and farm viability
- Strengthened open communication to maintain trust during this period of unavoidable strain

Enhanced precision agriculture, new varieties with improved tolerance to drought and disease, and enhanced soil and water management strategies will continue to shape competitiveness in the Belgian beetsector in the coming years.

At the same time, diversification is gaining importance. Sugar beet is a highly circular crop with applications in food, feed, bioenergy, bioplastics. This versatility offers opportunities to position the sector as a strategic contributor to the broader bio-based economy.

In a wrap, 2025 demonstrated the strength and potential of Belgian sugar beet production. 2026 demands realism, adaptability, and strong interprofessional cooperation. The mandatory 25% area reduction at RT represents a major challenge, yet also an opportunity to rethink and reinforce the sector. By investing in innovation, transparency, and sustainable relationships, Belgium will continue to play a reliable and forward-looking role within the European and global beet and cane growers' community.

Hendrik VANDAMME, President,
CBB - Confédération des Betteraviers Belges, Belgium