World Association of
Beet and Cane Growers

NEWS FROM WABCG DECEMBER 2024

News from WABCG:
To be retained from London

The World Association of Sugar Beet and Sugarcane Growers, which brings together 36 sugar beet and sugar cane growers' associations from 34 countries, met on 25th November in London (United Kingdom) and concluded its work with the following final statement.

"The WABCG dedicated its meeting to analysing the sugar and ethanol markets around the world. Sugar beet and cane require time and investment to grow, but the main outlets - sugar and ethanol - are highly volatile. **Dialogue within the industry to mitigate avoidable risks**, for instance by promoting fair value clauses and innovation in contracts should be encouraged globally to ensure that the **relationship between independent growers and factories is based on mutual respect and a long-term vision**.

Mitigating market volatility can also be achieved by diversifying outlets. Sugar cane and sugar beet have exceptional potential that should be encouraged. The valorisation of by-products (bagasse, pulp) should be encouraged and their value shared between farmers and factories.

Therefore, a permanent dialogue within the industry should be encouraged to ensure that the voice of the growers is respected: **independent, strong and recognised growers' organisations should be promoted worldwide**.

Their effectiveness in social and economic terms will be a guarantee of the environmental efforts made by growers on the ground: only prosperous growers can invest in the future and take risks to change their practices. WABCG stressed that **technological innovation is key to addressing environmental challenges, particularly those related to climate change**. While producers are among those most affected by climate change, they are also at the heart of the solutions. **Prioritising innovation, new technologies and technical support, in collaboration with governments and technical institutes, is essential and should be promoted globally**."

News from Côte d'Ivoire

The Côte d'Ivoire sugar harvest, which began in November 2023, ended in May 2024 with 2.11 million tonnes of cane producing 202,323 tonnes of sugar from a cultivated area of 28,775 hectares.

This represents an average yield of 74.00 tonnes of cane per hectare.

Compared with last year's production of 198,157 tonnes of sugar from 2.21 million tonnes of cane, giving a yield of 72.61 tonnes of cane per hectare, there has been a slight increase in national production.

The production of producers who are members of the *Fédération des Producteurs de Canne Villageoise de Côte d'Ivoire* (FEPCANVICI) during this 2023-2024 season is 159,138 tonnes of cane from an area of 4,910 hectares, giving a yield of 32.41 tonnes of cane per hectare, compared with 179,595 tonnes of cane from an area of 4,991 hectares, giving a yield of 35.38 tonnes of cane per hectare for the previous year. **This net decline in production by small growers is essentially due to soil impoverishment and low-yielding cane varieties.**

To remedy these shortcomings, growers are gradually opting to replace old, low-yielding cane varieties with high-yielding varieties such as Mauritian varieties adapted to our climate and to improving impoverished soils. For the time being, funding is being sought to popularise the varieties already tested by the *Fonds Commun de Base*. These varieties gave satisfactory results during the experimental phase.

It should also be noted that Côte d'Ivoire's population needs around 400,000 tonnes of sugar. This is due to the creation of secondary processing industries for biscuits, juices, sweets, etc. On the initiative of FEPCANVICI, a consultation and discussion forum was held in July 2024 between the Federation's producers and the Ministry of Agriculture to set out the difficulties faced by producers, including how to increase the purchase price per tonne of cane.

As a result, for this 2024-2025 campaign, **the purchase price per tonne of cane set by the Côte d'Ivoire government is 20,250 CFA francs (around 31 Euros), compared with 17500 CFA francs at SUCRIVOIRE and 18500 CFA francs at SUCAF CI, the two industrial centres for the past 10 years**.

However, there are plans for further discussions between growers, manufacturers and the Ministry on issues such as input subsidies (plant protection products and fertilisers), the setting up of an inter-professional body and the new mechanism for setting the price of a tonne of cane.

Théodore N'Dri Koffi, Executive Director
FEPCANVICI, Côte d'Ivoire

News from Southern Germany

Beet growers in southern Germany can look back on a mixed year, all in all the campaign is progressing well. But the sugar sector faces major challenges for the near future. On the one hand, sugar prices in Europe have collapsed significantly, and on the other, there are major difficulties in cultivation. Südzucker, the sugar company in which the southern German growers hold a majority stake, expects operating losses for the current sugar marketing year.

The 2024 cultivation year got off to a slow start. The considerable rainfall at the beginning of the year replenished the water supply in the soil, which had been dwindling for years. However, due to the wet conditions, farmers had to wait longer than usual before sowing. Only a few beet growers were able to start sowing at the beginning of March. Repeatedly falling rainfall caused a delay in sowing. The last beets were finally drilled at the end of April.

The beets generally emerged quickly. The high temperatures at the beginning of April led to very good beet development and vegetation progressed quickly. Occasionally, heavy rainfall led to silting and crusting. Some areas had to be plowed up and replanted. Slugs and earth fleas thinned out the beet stocks regionally, partly due to a lack of seed dressing.

The main vegetation period in southern Germany was characterized by warm and humid weather. The months of June and July brought recurring rainfall and high temperatures. This combination of warmth and moisture led to lush leaf development and beet growth. However, the warm and humid climate also favored the spread of fungal diseases, especially *Cercospora* leaf spot. In July, the trial harvests showed record results. From the beginning of August, as feared, the disease complex SBR/Stolbur, caused by the a specific cicada (Pentastiridius leporinus) as a vector, struck. The cicada transmits two pathogens (Proteobacterium, Phytoplasma) from early summer onwards, which have a massive impact on yield formation by causing both low sugar content and the so-called rubber beet. The area of infestation increases every year as the insects migrate to

Our challenge - SBR-Complex

The green square in the middle had been protected from cicada with a fine net.

Our situation:

- rapid spread from year to year
- currently 2/3 of our cultivated area is affected
- 50% is severely damaged
- there are no effective control options

Effects of the SBR complex

Yield losses of up to 50%

- low sugar content
- red beets
- poor storage capacity

➔ increasing processing costs
➔ increasing risk for growers

Know your enemy: *Pentastiridius leporinus*

new areas and establish themselves there. In the current cultivation year 2024, the infestation in sugar beet is estimated at over 75,000 ha. The cicada is expected to spread throughout Europa in the short to medium term.

The good yield expectations as well as the enormous and rapidly spreading SBR and stolbur in some regions spoke in favor of an earlier start to the campaign at the beginning of September. Dry and summery temperatures prevailed at the start of harvesting. In the course of September, however, heavy rainfall set in, which lasted until mid-October. After that it remained dry so that the clearing could progress well. By mid-November, over 90 % of the beet had already been harvested. The harvesting conditions in 2024 were significantly better than in the previous year 2023.

The good weather conditions led to a good beet yield, but the low sunshine duration, Cercospora and SBR caused low sugar contents.
Due to the very rapid spread of the SBR complex, there is already a great deal of concerted research and trial work by all those involved in the southern German sugar industry. The first positive results are available from the 2024 trials. A solution to this existential challenge must be found as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, we expect the problem to spread further in Europe.

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

Read our latest study!

'Carbon farming': what are the challenges for sugar beet and sugar cane growers?

Farmers are fully aware of climate change: they are the first to suffer its effects. As citizens and producers, they are also mindful that they have a role in reducing their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. To this end, an increasing number of agricultural practices aimed at reducing these emissions or storing carbon have been identified and recently grouped under the term 'carbon farming'. Through this survey of 21 members, the World Association of Sugar Beet and Cane Growers (WABCG) sheds light on its vision of carbon farming. What techniques are available? What funding is available? What are the hopes and fears of independent growers? 'Carbon farming' is gaining traction amongst sugar beet and cane growers because it is perceived as a potential source of additional income for the grower. With a few exceptions, this rarely proves to be the case, especially as there seems to be a movement afoot implement certain crop production practices compulsory (not just legally but also commercially). Yet these practices come with costs, not only in terms of production, but also reduced productivity, impacting competitiveness.

'Carbon farming': what are the challenges for sugar beet and sugarcane growers?

Timothé Masson

Link to read the full study:
https://sugarindustry.info/paper/32433/