



NEWS FROM WABCG

OCTOBER 2023

EDITORIAL

The world sugar market hit a 12-year high this month, with raw sugar at over 27 cts/lb! So let's celebrate: it is excellent news for all of us!

But this is clearly linked to the fact that for the 5th consecutive year, our production is lower than demand.



And we all know why: it is due to the fact that almost all of us have had disappointing crops over the past years, with climatic disasters. And it is not over, the impacts of El Niño are only just beginning, and our colleagues in Asia and Central and South America are very aware of it.

We also know that if production was not at record level around the world, it is also because our exploding costs, which may have caused less use of fertilizers on our fields. So the farmers need a high level of prices in order to remain in the sugar industry.

Because we know perfectly well that sugar value is highly volatile: low prices will come back and we must prepare ourselves for this! If we want the industry to be sustainable, we need comfortable beet and cane prices when sugar prices are high, to enable us to produce below our production costs when this is the case – as was the case for many of us a few years ago.

Moreover, these high prices should be the occasion for us, around the world, to work together towards new projects and prepare for the future. Let's discuss this at our meeting in London next month.

I am looking forward to seeing you there!

David Thompson, President
WABCG

NEWS FROM SWEDEN

We have entered a new campaign and beets has been delivered to the Swedish factory since mid-September. The root yields vary a lot and the sugar content are in general lower than usual. The weather has been a challenge with dry conditions during May and June and a lot of rain during July and August. However, the sugar beets once again shows that they can handle these thought weather conditions, thanks to the long period of growth. While other crops in the rotation have underperformed this season, due to the weather, the beet yields are estimated to be close to average. With a good beet price, they add some extra value and resilience to the farming business.



The weather conditions this year has also reminded us about how small the margins are to handle weeds. In years with perfect spraying conditions and good soil moisture we can manage the weeds with available tools. But during dry springs, like 2023, and fewer days with good spraying conditions the toolbox are too small. As a result, we now have weeds competing for precious water and sunlight, probably reducing the yield potential. **Without adding some new tools to our toolbox weeding will be a challenge the coming years.** In Sweden we have the option to use herbicide tolerant varieties, this year on about 27 % of the sugar beet area. If/When more active substances are removed from the toolbox, I guess the interest for these varieties will increase even more.

If we look one year ahead, to 2024, we see a great interest in beet growing in Sweden. For the first time since the deregulation in 2017, the interest has been so big that the growers' requests for contracted area have been reduced by the industry. The great interest is of course a consequence of a good beet price, but



World Association of
Beet and Cane Growers



also an effect of the strength of beets in the rotation. The worldwide situation with big fluctuations on markets and prices of e.g. fertilizers and energy has highlighted the importance of being present in different markets.

To face the future challenges for beet growing the importance of relevant research, trials and developing projects for our crop cannot be stressed enough. Climate changes, weather conditions with drought and heavy rains, lack of effective substances for plant protection and political pressure are only some of the challenges we face. **In Sweden we fund our organization for research and development, Nordic beet Research, NBR, together with Danish beet growers and beet industry in Sweden and Denmark.**

For the last eight years NBR has been successfully developed under the lead of Desirée Börjesdotter. Since the 1st September NBR is handed over from De-



sirée to Joakim Herrström (see picture). Joakim has more than 25 years of experience from sugar beets worldwide, mainly from breeding industry. Under the lead of Joakim, NBR will continue the important and relevant work for beet growers in Sweden and Denmark, and with collaborators around the world.

As this text is written we just celebrated our beet event the 4th October. Together with NBR and the industry, Nordic Sugar, we have invited beet growers to a field day and we had more than 500 participants. This year we put some extra light on the importance of harvest and storage of beets. These two topics are the final sprint of the beet season. Only if the harvest and storage is well managed the effort and investments during the cropping season are paid fully.



Next meetings

WABCG/ISO Consultation

20 November 2023

London, UK

Registration is open!

WABCG Council

18-21 June 2024

Fargo, USA

Save the date!

Ida Lindell, General Secretary

Betdolarna, Swedish beet growers association, Sweden



NEWS FROM GERMANY (RHINELAND)

An old saying goes that every year in agriculture is different from the years before. This also applies to sugar beet cultivation in 2023. After a long period of rainy weather in spring, sowing of sugar beet started in western Germany only at the beginning of April. Sowing was interrupted several times by further rainfall. In total, sugar beet sowing extended over a period



of six weeks and did not end until mid-May.

The weather changed completely in mid-May. Between mid-May and mid-July there was hardly any rain and very high temperatures, in some cases over 35 degrees Celsius. Sometimes these weather conditions were stressful for

sugar beet and other crops. Many beet growers were already worried about another summer drought. However, just in time for sugar beet in the Rhenish beet growing region, the weather situation changed again in mid-July. Rainy and low-sunlight weather followed until September. The number of sunshine hours only increased again in September.

Sugar beet showed good growth due to the rainfall and moderate temperatures from mid-July to the end of August. Unfortunately, sugar content hardly increased during this time, so we are currently assuming a below-average sugar content of less than 16.5% for the upcoming harvest. Due to the good beet yield of about 80 t/ha, we hope to achieve an average sugar yield overall.

We agreed with our sugar industry partner, Pfeifer & Langen, that the 2023 beet campaign would start relatively late. On the one hand, we wanted to extend the growth period of the sugar beet, because the 2023 sugar beet growing year started unusually late due to the late sowing. On the other hand, we hoped that the sunny September with increasingly cooler nights would still have a positive effect on the sugar

content of the beet. Two sugar factories therefore began beet processing at the end of September and one on 4th October. With a beet area remaining constant compared to last year, the Rhenish beet campaign is expected to last until the beginning of January 2024.

The mood of the Rhenish beet growers has improved compared to previous years, despite the ever-increasing political demands on arable farming.

This good mood is mainly due to the improved market situation, which currently makes it possible to grow beet economically again. **But it is also due to our new beet delivery contract that offers sugar beet growers a higher level of flexibility and annual adjustment options. For instance, growers can decide on their beet delivery quantity every year. In addition, they can choose between a fixed price and a flexible beet payment based on the market price.** Currently, the market-dependent flexible beet payment system is more interesting.

Furthermore, sugar beet is a valuable crop rotation element. In times when the EU Commission wants to make agriculture more ecological via the Green Deal,



growers are once again appreciating its advantages. But our sugar beet growers are concerned about the EU Commission's plant protection policy. The Commission has made a proposal for a regulation on the sustainable use of plant protection products which, if implemented as proposed, would mean a complete ban on the use of plant protection products for

a considerable part of our arable land. Agriculture is strongly opposing this proposal at German and European level.

We hope that realism will prevail and that a solution acceptable to agriculture and beet growers will be found. If this succeeds, we assume that sugar beet cultivation in our growing region will continue to be stable and will remain an important part of the crop rotations.

*Dr Peter Kasten, Managing Director
Rhineland Beet Growers' Association, Germany*