



NEWS FROM WABCG

MAY 2025

EDITORIAL

Our colleagues from Canegrowers, in Australia, are preparing a fantastic Council for us, in Cairns, next June!

I am delighted that almost 50 delegates from 16 countries have already registered. This meeting will be an opportunity for us to exchange views on the situation in our countries.



I am sure that the discussions will be rich, from global politics to local health issues.

This will also be the occasion for us, the members of WABCG, to elect our new Board, which will have to lead WABCG from now until 2028. So, during my last meeting as President of WABCG, we will elect from among ourselves a new President - who will be a representative of the sugar cane sector - and new representatives from the beet sector and for the sugar cane sector in due proportion. This will also be the occasion for us to choose the places where we will meet in the coming years.

New people will run the WABCG, but at the same pace: that of a family, meeting, discussing what unites us and sometimes what divides us. But always trusting that discussion is the first step towards a better world!

I look forward to seeing you in Cairns!

David Thompson, President WABCG

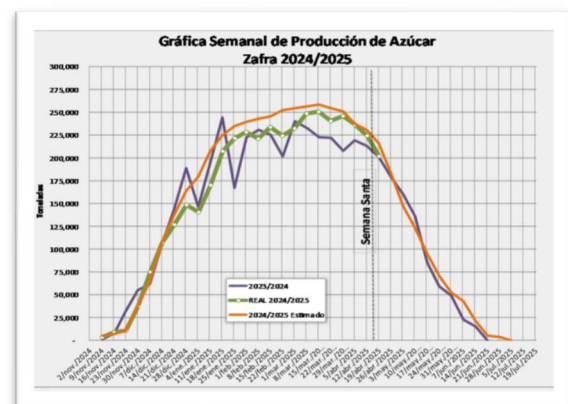
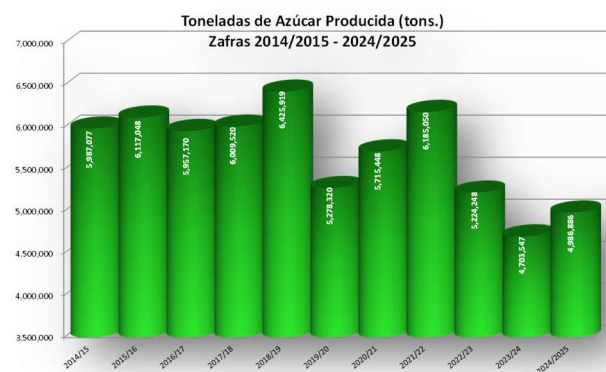
NEWS FROM MEXICO

The present season, 'Zafra' (*Ed: the word used to name the campaign*) 2024/25, is at full throttle.



83% of the estimated sugar-cane has been harvested. 47 out of the 49 mills went into operation. At this date only 4 mills have concluded operations.

The official estimate for this season (Z-24/25), Third Estimate, considered 47.16 million tons of cane, from 746,882 hectares, with an average yield of 63.14 TCH. The expected Factory Yield is 10.57% and sugar production is 4.987 million tons. Average sugar per hectare 6.68 tons.



Actual results shows that production will be a bit below the estimated numbers. The Sugar Balance



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presented by government officials of CONADESUCAR reports that from the estimated 4.987 tons of sugar 79% will be consumed domestically. Our country, because of an import excess in 23/24, of 400+ thousand tonnes, will export in 24/25 a volume of 1.553 million tonnes, from this figure, Mexican sugar export destinations are USA 27%, IMMEX 23% (Ed: a duty program that allows duty-free imports if products are re-exported) and World Market 50%.

This year, the canegrowers of Ingenio San Rafael de Pucte, a sugar mill located in the State of Quintana Roo, southeastern most producing region border with Belize, reported a huge, affected area, close to 10 thousand hectares, affected by *fusarium.sp*, this fungi has been present in different areas of the country, but never expressed as is happening in the Pucte area. We are promoting in coordination with the other participants in the industry, to develop a scientific study of the case.

Ciclo Azucarero 2024/2025
Producción Zafra 4.987 millones de toneladas



Mexican sugarcane regions are quite dispersed, so different weather and production conditions prevail, also is important to consider that Mexican canegrowers detent small areas. Compared with the previous two seasons, this year we had better rain patterns and growing conditions, on the other hand, domestic sugar prices have been weak and expected cane price is 25% below previous year price. Considering the modest increment in productivity and the lower domestic price, farmers will see a huge reduction in their revenue.

In other issues, related to SAF, the Mexican officials of the aeronautical sector have been in close contact with the sugarcane agroindustry. Mexico's government is more in the line of the ATJ technology, so we see very interesting opportunity for sugarcane, understanding that there's still a long road to ride, since cane production and processing must be sustainable certified (ORSIA), and many other steps that need to be accomplished.

As of 19th April 2025, sugar production reached 4.05 million tonnes, that figure is 1.49% more than same date last year. Sugarcane processed are 38.92 million tonnes, 3.37% below last year. The area harvested is 584,560 hectares, cane yield is at 66.58 TCH, close to 1 tonne more than previous year. Still 43 mills are in operation. According to the official estimates 83% of the cane have been processed and the sugar produced accounts for 80% of the sugar production expected for the Zafra 24/25.

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Carlos Blackaller, President
Unión Nacional de Cañeros, A. C. – CNPR, Mexico

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 36 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.



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NEWS FROM FINLAND

Finland had an excellent sugar beet harvest last summer. The yield per hectare was 15% above the five-year average. Although the sugar content of the sugar beet was one percentage point lower than the average, the harvest satisfied most farmers.



The beet harvest was mainly carried out in good weather conditions and almost all the beets were lifted. The beet soil tare was exception-

ally low. The sugar beet was also able to remain of good quality until the end of the growing season, so the sugar factory was able to operate at full capacity throughout the campaign. Despite this, the campaign was longer than normal.

Although there was no exceptional weed or disease pressure last summer, farmers are nevertheless very concerned about the constantly decreasing range of pesticides. There are no substitutes for the pesticides that are being phased out, or they are clearly more expensive and generally less effective.

In sugar beet cultivation, Conviso Smart varieties have remained popular and last summer their share was over 60%. They can simplify sugar beet cultivation and weed control and ensure the effectiveness of control. New plant breeding techniques are expected to be quickly introduced to solve plant health problems caused by climate change.

The weaker price of sugar beet in previous years is reflected in the investment debt for cultivation and harvesting machinery in Finland. The average age of machinery is increasing and the possibility of machine breakdowns in the middle of the busiest harvest season is increasing. This was clearly visible in the lifting of beet last autumn despite mainly favorable harvesting conditions.

Finnish farmers are still concerned about the high production costs. Energy and fertilizer prices turned downward after the peak in 2022, but prices are still more than a quarter higher than they were before the Ukrainian war. Machinery and construction costs did not rise as high as fertilizers during 2022, but their cost level has continued to rise even during 2024.

The price of sugar beet was raised to a level that satisfied farmers for 2023 and 2024 as a result of the favorable sugar market and cost pressures. The decline in world and EU sugar prices made contract negotiations more difficult and lowered the price of sugar beet for this 2025 season. Global political instability and the resulting market uncertainty and rapid changes must be taken into account in future inter-professional agreement negotiations and when determining price models for sugar beet.

The EU's simplification programs are part of a broader effort to reduce the complexity of regulation in agriculture and other policy sectors. Farmers face a heavy administrative burden, so simplification measures are considered very necessary. Farmers hope that simplification will also reach the farm level in agriculture, and not just to ease government administration.

Despite the challenges, Finnish farmers are confident about the future. The willingness to cultivate has remained at a good level. The growing season that has begun has been early and despite the weather fluctuations, expectations are for good harvests this season as well.



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Juha Wikström

Chairman of the MTK Sugar Beet Committee, Finland



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NEWS FROM BELGIUM

Belgium's sugar beet industry, a pillar of the country's agriculture, is currently facing significant challenges. Adverse weather conditions and growing demands for sustainability are redefining agricultural and industrial practices.

The 2024 beet campaign was marked by difficult weather conditions. A cold and rainy start to the season delayed sowing until mid-April, and even early May in some regions. The wet summer months favoured root growth but also resulted in below-average sugar content. In September and October, exceptionally high temperatures prolonged beet growth, but did not allow a significant increase in sugar concentration. These climatic variations made harvesting and transporting beet particularly complex, affecting root quality and posing logistical challenges for sugar factories.

Faced with these challenges, the industry's players have stepped up their efforts in terms of modernisation and sustainability. Raffinerie Tirlémontoise, for example, has invested in a new 38-metre-high extraction tower, aimed at reducing CO₂ emissions by almost 6,000 tonnes and saving 150,000 cubic metres of water annually. These initiatives are part of a wider strategy to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

As part of its sustainable competitiveness strategy, the Iscal plant has undertaken a significant industrial upgrade aimed at boosting the efficiency of its production lines while incorporating strict environmental standards. The investment focuses in particular on automating processes, optimising the energy consumption of thermal and mechanical equipment, and reducing emissions and water consumption. At the same time, Iscal is strengthening its partnerships with beet growers in order to consolidate a resilient local industry based on sustainable cultivation practices (longer rotations, agri-environmental indicators, pulp valorisation). This modernisation will help to secure the competitiveness of the upstream agricultural sector, while meeting growing demands in terms of traceability, sustainability and environmental performance.

The weather conditions of 2024 also favoured the development of leaf diseases, in particular *Cercosporiosis*, which affected the whole of Belgium. The Royal Belgian Institute for the Improvement of Beet (Irbab) has observed a rapid spread of this disease, requiring

increased vigilance and appropriate phytosanitary measures.

To ensure the long-term future of the industry, an integrated approach is essential. This means adopting resilient farming practices, such as choosing disease-resistant varieties and optimising soil management. At the same time, industrial investment must continue to improve energy efficiency and reduce the environmental footprint. Collaboration between farmers, researchers and industry is crucial if we are to develop innovative solutions to the climatic and economic challenges we face.

In conclusion, the Belgian sugar beet industry is going through a period of transformation, faced with climatic, health and environmental challenges. Joint efforts in terms of innovation, sustainability and collaboration will be key to ensuring its future and competitiveness on the European market.

Muriel Weverbergh, CEO
Joseph Cleiren, President

Confédération des Betteraviers Belges (CBB), Belgique



Source : Institut Technique de la Betterave