USA vs. EU Potato Production

USA

The United States potato industry is the fifth largest in the world in terms of production of raw potatoes. It falls behind China, India, Russia, and the Ukraine. Moreover, in relation to processed potatoes, the USA comes in 3rd place in terms of export value. Preceded by the Netherlands and Belgium, and ahead of Canada and Germany. In 2015, the overall land in the US under potato cultivation, was 400,000 hectares, or approximately 1 million acres. The total harvest from this hectarage was 22 million metric tons, or just above 49 billion lbs. This puts the US yield per hectare at just over 52 metric tons, or 1033 cwt. With a production value of raw potatoes of $3.9 billion in 2015. Additionally, over 90% of the yearly harvest occurs in the fall, with potatoes harvested in the summer, winter, and spring accounting for less than 10% of total volume.

Of this production, over 2/3rd's is produced in Western states of the continental US. With 2 states alone, Washington and Idaho, accounting for over 50% of total US production. Rounding out the top 5 potato states by production, is North Dakota, Wisconsin, and Colorado.

Over the years, the amount of potatoes that have been designated for processing, versus fresh table potatoes, has increased dramatically, and constantly. In fact, today almost 65% of the total potatoes harvested, go towards processing of some form or another. With over 1/3rd of the percentage going towards french fries alone. The processing of frozen and dehydrated products, tend to occur within the growing regions. So, this processing is concentrated in the Pacific Northwest, Northeast, and upper Midwest. Whereas chipping processing occurs all over, mostly near large population centers, due the high shipping costs associated with such a light product.

In terms of trade, the US is a net exporter of potatoes and potato products. To the tune of an average of $180 million yearly surplus. The majority of this trade and surplus is realized through trading processed, value-added items. In fact, fries constitute over 50% of exported processed items. Our biggest trade partners are Japan, Canada, and Mexico, accounting for 2/3rd's of total US potato product exports.

While there are hundreds and hundreds of varieties of potatoes that can be grown. There is only a handful of varieties that are the most commonly planted and harvested within the US. These varieties are as follows: Russet Burbank, Russet Norkotah, Ranger Russet, Umatilla Russet, and Norland.

EU

The EU potato industry is comprised of the production, harvest, and other statistics from the 28* EU member countries. The EU potato industry is dominated by a few Member States, and several others are responsible for negligible amounts. This fact is highlighted by the statistic that 2 out of 3 potatoes harvested within the EU, come from only five of the Member States. These five Member State in descending order in terms of production are: Germany, France, the Netherlands, Poland, and lastly the UK. Additionally, all of those Member States, excluding the UK, are in the top 10 in the world in terms of potato production.

In 2015, the total area under potato cultivation within the EU was 1.6 million hectares. The countries of Germany, France, and Poland, accounted for just under 50% of the total hectarage. The total yield for 2015 on these plantings was 53 million metric tons. This puts the EU yield per hectare at approximately 33 metric tons, or about 650 cwt. With an overall production value of $11 billion in raw potatoes in 2015. Just under half of this production value was realized by three Member States, those being France, Germany, and the Netherlands.

As with the US, the potato processing industry in the EU has increased dramatically, with over 50% of harvested potatoes going to one form of processing or another. The processing industry produced just shy of $10 billion in terms of value. Of this total, over 80% was derived from the value in the production of potato chips and french fries. These processing activities predominantly took place in six countries, those being: the Netherlands, Belgium, the UK, France, Germany, and Italy. While it is impossible to determine a definitive ranking of processing countries, there is a noticeable specialization in certain products. For instance, Italy is far and away, the EU leader in frozen potato production (uncooked or cooked by steaming or boiling in water), at 62% in terms of value. Whereas Germany is the clear leader in production value of dried potatoes, and potatoes preserved as flour/meal/flakes, at 74% and 51%, of total EU value, respectively. The Netherlands produced over 33% of the Unions frozen french fries. Lastly the UK owns the largest value share of potato chip production.

In regard to trade, the EU is a net exporter of potatoes and potato products. Trade occurs both within and outside the EU, however intra-EU trade is far more important in both value and volume. When looking at only the trade of processed products to countries outside the EU, the EU realized an annual surplus of approximately $1.4 billion.

As with the US there are hundreds of varieties of potatoes to be grown. However, over the years, several varieties have become very common ones planted. These varieties are: Innovator, Challenger, Agria, Bintje, Fontane, and Lady Claire.