



Foreign Agricultural Service

**GAIN Report**

Global Agriculture Information Network

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# **Belgium-Luxembourg**

## **Market Development Reports**

### **2001 Potato Harvest Problems**

### **2001**

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#### **Report Highlights:**

The 2001 Belgian potato harvest is facing quality, yield and storage problems. Spring 2002 supplies are expected to be tight and prices should increase.

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Includes PSD changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
Unscheduled Report  
The Hague [NL1], BE

**The 2001 Belgian potato harvest is experiencing considerable yield, quality and storage problems.**

The 2001 potato planting started out late (May instead of April) because of a wet spring. The result was a 5 percent reduction in planting area, compared to 2000.

In August, dry weather caused secondary tuber induction, which lowered tuber yield and quality.

In September, heavy rains flooded many fields, placing the potatoes under water for more than 48 hours and causing many to begin rotting. *Erwinia* infections are thought to have worsened the problem. The press reported that farmers did not bother harvesting 2-3,000 hectares (out of the 62,658 hectare total planted area) because of the rotting.

Potatoes from another 10,000 hectares are now exhibiting problems in storage and are being sold as fast as possible, at prices 0.5 BEF below the market price of around 3 BEF per kg for healthy potatoes (1US\$ = 45.88BEF).

Belgian average potato yields in 2001 are estimated at 39.6 tons per hectare, down 10.8 percent from 44.4 tons in 2000. Production in 2001 is down 14.8 percent to 2,683,000 MT, from 3,148,000 MT in 2000. Agra Europe estimates EU-15 production at 44.7 million tons in 2001, down 8.4 percent from 48.80 million tons in 2000.

Besides Belgium, The Netherlands and Northern France are also experiencing problems. Spring potato supplies are expected to be tight and prices should increase. Imports from other European countries may eventually fill the demand but there is a chance that higher prices in the Spring could present some opportunities for U.S. exporters.