WAPA releases a first update of the European apple crop

WAPA, the World Apple and Pear Association, has started to revise the European apple crop forecast for the upcoming season, which was released in early August during Prognosfruit.

The first estimates have been revised downwards due to the intense weather conditions in August that affected the colouring and size of a part of the crop. The resulting quality issues will also impact the percentage of the crop destined for processing. The development of the lower-than-expected crop will also be influenced by the skyrocketing electricity prices, which might prevent growers from picking a part of their crop due to the unaffordable storage costs as well as the shortage of seasonal workers.

WAPA, the World Apple and Pear Association, has published a first update of the European apple crop forecast for the upcoming season, which was first published during Prognosfruit 2022. The first indications from the orchards suggest that the European apple crop will be reduced to 12.076.000 T, about 90.000 T smaller than August's forecast (12.168.000 T), with most countries except Poland and the Czech Republic revising their original estimates downwards – in particular

France, Italy, and Spain. In the USA as well the crop was revised downwards following the USApples annual event in Chicago, with an estimated apple crop of 4.6 million T.

On the occasion of the forecast revision, WAPA received feedback from its members on the crop challenges and implications for European growers for the season. The shortage of seasonal workers is one of the issues that has persisted since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic and has become even more relevant for those working with Ukrainian seasonal workers, such as Poland. An additional issue that has emerged is the skyrocketing price of electricity, which would drive up the cost of storage facilities to unsustainable levels for growers. Several growers might be forced to refrain from picking a part of their crop to avoid the economic drawbacks caused by the storage costs and the expected return being lower than overall production costs.

These factors represent a huge concern for the final crop and the competitiveness of producers and therefore even threaten the business continuity of the sector. In addition to the limited return on investment for growers, another issue will be the size of the fresh apple and pear. Intense weather conditions in August (heatwaves and droughts in some regions) have negatively affected the size and colouring of a part of the crop, which will likely lead to a larger percentage of fruit being destined for processing.

WAPA will continue to monitor the developments of the season and will later on further adjust the forecast as the picking concludes for a season where the main priority is ensuring that the supply chain and the growers are able to recover the massive costs increases and preserve the continuity of the supply and stimulate consumption.