

Romania ranks 6th in potato production, 4th in cultivated area in EU, in 2020

Romania had a potato production of 2.68 million tonnes last year, ranking 6th in the European Union, Germany ranking first with 11.55 million tonnes, according to provisional data issued by the National Institute of Statistics (INS).

France followed Germany, with 8.73 million tonnes, being followed by the Netherlands - 7.09 million tonnes, Poland - 6.48 million tonnes and Belgium, with 4.1 million tonnes.

By cultivated area, Romania ranked 4th with 166,000 hectares, after Poland (359,000 hectares), Germany (275,000 hectares) and France (206,000 hectares).

Provisional INS data show that last year the local potato harvest was slightly higher than in 2019, an increase of 56,000 tonnes, although the drought caused serious damage in 2020, while the cultivated area decreased by about 3,000 hectares.

Romania had a potato production of 3.5 - 4 million tonnes 10 years ago, but on larger areas, between 200,000 - 250,000 hectares, but in the last five years the cultivated areas have constantly decreased below 200,000 hectares. The areas with a tradition in potato cultivation are Harghita, Covasna, Brasov, Suceava and Sibiu.

On February 18, Romulus Oprea, head of the National Potato Federation in Romania (FNCR), told an online debate that "the second bread of Romanians" has been ignored in the past 30 years and that is why we are now cultivating some ridiculous surfaces.

Oprea claimed that this culture is retreating, "slowly", in the traditional areas, and due to climate change this retreat will be more and more accentuated.

Regarding the imports of frozen potatoes, the president of FNCR claimed that in 1996 Romania imported only 600 tonnes, and currently it is close to 90,000 tonnes of pre-fried and frozen potatoes imported through supermarket chains.

The Romanian potato market amounts to 1.4 billion euros, and the production in the vegetal weight is of 8.6pct, according to some studies conducted by a specialized company.

In 2018, the average monthly consumption per person was 3.02 kilogrammes, but self-employed workers and pensioners easily exceed this level, the lowest consumption being recorded in the households of farmers, unemployed and employees.

Domestic consumption of potatoes is estimated at about two million tonnes, with 500,000 tonnes more for seed, processing and feed.