

Crisis to come in UK potato processing Industry?

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A potato industry source has disclosed that in their opinion the UK potato processing industry may have a potential crisis on their hands this season due to contract tonnage shortfalls. This is combined with a host of other problematic quality issues including difficulties finding sound material, suitable for storage, to fill their stores with.

Variations in crop yields caused by extreme weather conditions mean that it is unlikely all contracted potato growers will be able to fulfill contract tonnages.

Overall, potato yields in Britain, England in particular, have been disappointing, mainly due to the high July temperatures. A 500,000 ton reduction in this seasons potato crop compared to last year has already been forecast.

Unconfirmed reports also point to a recurrence of potato rustling in Britain on a scale not seen since 1976.

Processors attempts to police contract potato tonnages, which have been at low prices compared to the free buy market for the past two or three years, are also proving difficult due to industry cutbacks.

Although potato prices have fallen slightly in recent weeks this can be attributed to either problematic crops, which have to be sold or the fact that some growers do not have storage facilities and sell green top.

Once main crop storage gets fully underway it is predicted that prices will increase for good quality and continue to do so throughout the season. Although poorer quality may be on offer at lower prices this cannot be stored medium to long term if suffering from rots in the crop and often poorer quality is not of a high enough specification for processors to use. The pre-packing industry may also suffer from some of these issues too.

The single biggest factor, which could exaggerate any shortfall in processing potatoes in Britain this season is that there cannot be any long term reprieve for processors from European imports. Northern European potato growing nations are all having and suffering from quality issues caused in the main by the deluge of rainfall in August. Second growth, rot issues like blight, low or variable dry matter are just some of the problems causing havoc in Europe at the moment. With this in mind European processors and potato companies could actually be looking to buy from the United Kingdom.

Indications point to the possibility that it could be the highest priced potato season of all time, not just in the UK but in Europe too.