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Sorghum acreage: confirmed increase in Europe

For the second year in a row, sorghum acreage in Europe is on the rise. The figures published by Sorghum ID, the European sorghum inter-branch, confirm the growing interest of European farmers in this crop. For sorghum grain, acreage estimates reach 174,000 ha in the EU-28, a 19% increase compared to 2018. A similar increase is observed for sorghum silage, which is increasing by 18% for an estimated acreage of 86,400 ha.

Acreage increase in the whole continent...

In the EU, the dry conditions of late 2018 / early 2019 penalized rapeseed and wheat sowing, and encouraged farmers to turn to alternative crops. As a spring crop with low water requirements, sorghum was the obvious choice. This is the case in France, where the acreage of grain and silage sorghum is up by 14% and 20% respectively, thereby strengthening its status of top European producer.

In Central Europe, significant acreage increases were observed in Romania (+ 19%), Hungary (+ 50%) and Austria (+ 30%). The high yields of 2018 and the diversity of the available varieties have helped to make sorghum a profitable crop in the producers' minds.

... and in third countries

In Ukraine, grain sorghum acreage increased by more than 25% to reach 54,000 ha. In Russia, despite the lack of fully reliable data, it is believed this trend should follow the same track. Finally in Iran, another country where Sorghum ID is carrying out promotion activities, the acreage is announced to reach 65,000ha (grain + silage), a 40% increase compared to 2018.

Volumes still to be confirmed

In parallel with the acreage increase, production should also meet expectations and show a substantial increase even if it is still too early to assess it precisely at this stage. It should be noted that the weather conditions are favourable for the good development of sorghum in Eastern and Central Europe, while the cumulative episodes of drought and heatwaves have harmed the potential of plants in Western Europe. It will be necessary to take stock at the end of the crop year on the balance of production on a continental scale.

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