

Survey on Current Rapeseed in Spain

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For the last ten years, the area devoted to rapeseed crop in Spain has been stagnant with about 10.000 ha, and a peak of 24.100 ha in 1991. This area was located in zones with relatively high rainfalls in northern Spain, mainly in Navarra.

However, in the last crop year (93/94), there has been an increasing interest for this crop, so the area devoted to food rapeseed has reached 69.128 ha, - 2.160 ha of which being for non-food production on set-aside land. Detailed figures on rapeseed crop areas and production for the last four years are given on Table 1 below.

Such an increase takes place together with a decrease in the area dedicated to sunflower, as a result of the limitations from the EU norms. This growth in the area of cultivation has taken place in Andalucía, in southern Spain, while in the more traditional zone, Navarra, the area has decreased down to 747 ha.

The aforementioned figure, despite small, means that Spain has exceeded the maximum assigned area, so that the EU could impose a fine to Spain. The best solution for this situation would be the assignment of an amount corresponding to this area from the annual (1994) excedentary amount of the EU to increase the Spanish quota, considering the small figure of this crop area. It would be important to avoid the fine because rapeseed could represent a considerable role in Spanish crop rotations.

On the other hand, the system 'assignment of area quotas per country' does not seem to be the more efficient method, and probably must be reviewed in the short term, since it strengthens former situations which restrict the crop evolution and sets up differences in claims within the EU-countries.

From the point of view of technical changes, we could remark that though the replacement of 0-cultivars by 00-cultivars took place a long time ago, it is still perceived by farmers as a yield reducing factor. Curiously enough, this does not match, at least on magnitude levels, with the results of comparative essays of different cultivars. However, it could be expected that the development of new cultivars and the use of hybrids will solve this problem.

It is difficult to forecast the evolution of rapeseed crops in the future, as there exist factors of different signs. Probably, it would be positive to put on the same level aids for rapeseed and sunflower and also the remarkable prospects created by rapeseed aimed to non-food uses. Nevertheless, the seeming decrease in average rainfalls recorded in many Spanish regions through the last decade, and again in the autumn of 1994, could raise a very unfavourable phenomenon. Because of that, a major objective of research should be to find new cultivars which would be less sensitive to water deficiencies.

Table 1. Rapeseed areas and production in Spain (1991-94)

Year	Crop Area (ha)		Crop Production (tn)	
	Food use	Non-Food use	Food use	Non-Food use
1991	11.820	-	17.000	-
1992	8.490	-	13.000	-
1993	9.560	-	12.000	-
1994	66.960	2.160	53.000	2.000