

The Cultivation of Rapeseed in Spain

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In 1996, the area devoted to rapeseed production in Spain increased to 97,566 ha, - which means more than 18% compared to the previous year. However in 1997 and 1998, values fell to 52,880 and 46,082 ha respectively, the latter representing a 57% reduction of the 1996 figure.

The main cause of this decrease was the fall in production registered in Andalucía, which was the main area of cultivation between 1994 and 1996, with a dedicated area of some 40 - 45,000 ha.

This decrease in cultivation area was general to the whole country with the exception of the Autonomous of Castilla La Mancha which maintained its crop area over the three-year period 1996 to 1998, following a large increase in production in 1993. Table 1 compares the area under rapeseed cultivation in the different autonomous communities of Spain from 1996 to 1998.

The mean yields obtained for this three year period are relatively low, due in part to low and irregular rainfalls (perhaps a consequence of global climatic changes), and to the fact that in some cases crops were cultivated on soils of marginal suitability.

On the other hand, since 1994, non-food rape has been situated already at 2,000 ha. This type of production has not acquired the necessary importance from an energetic as well as from an ecological point of view.

At the present time, the future of rapeseed production in Spain is not too bright, especially if the support received from the EU is reduced to the same levels as that provided for cereals, in line with the reforms outlined by the Community Agricultural Policy.

It would seem that the decrease in rapeseed production cannot be explained by strictly agronomic reasons, but rather because of planning problems. In the regions where mean production was the highest (Navarra and Sevilla), the area under rapeseed cultivation was drastically reduced when in fact its cultivation seemed to be a high point in its expansion.

Table 1. Rapeseed Cultivation Area in Spain

Autonomous Region Area (ha)

	1996	1997 (1)	1998 (1)	1998 % over 1997
Galicia	*	*	*	*
P. de Asturias	*	*	*	*
Cantabria	*	*	*	*
Pais Vasco	210	70	42	60,0
Navarra	4241	3417	3075	90,0
La Rioja	66	*	160	*
Aragon	12829	8711	5616	64,52
Cataluña	3050	3079	2967	96,4
Baleares	*	130	12	9,2
Castilla Leon	3686	2720	1684	61,9
Madrid	234	*	*	*
Castilla La Mancha	16077	14987	16344	109,1
C. Valenciana	1619	*	400	*
R. de Murica	*	*	*	*
Extremadura	11705	3230	7065	218,7
Andalucia	43849	16536	8717	52,7
Canarias	*	*	*	*
SPAIN	97566	52880	46082	87,1

Source : Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación, Madrid.

Advances of crop area and crop production, July 1, 1998.

(1) Estimations