

EU Commission expects larger legume area for the 2024 harvest

UFOP: make ecosystem services visible – strengthen communication with consumers

Berlin, 3 April 2024 – The EU Commission expects an expansion in hectareage planted with legumes for the 2024 harvest in the EU-27. The increase in area is anticipated for sweet lupins, field beans and especially soybeans. From the perspective of the Union zur Förderung von Oel- und Proteinpflanzen e. V. (UFOP), this development at best confirms the trend towards expansions in protein crop area. However, the association has stated that a disproportionate upward trend can still not be identified, although due to heavy rainfall in major legume-producing EU countries in the autumn of 2023 a large part of the winter crops could not be sown.

According to a first estimate of the EU Commission, the EU area planted with legumes for the 2024 harvest is set to grow a full 3.5 per cent to just less than 2.8 million hectares, reaching its largest expanse recorded to date. Soybeans have accounted for the largest share since 2018. The soybean area is estimated to increase 10.2 per cent year-on-year to 1.1 million hectares, exceeding the threshold of 1 million hectares for the second year running. In other words, the previous record high seen in 2022 would be only just surpassed. The field bean area is projected to rise just less than 2.3 per cent to around 484,000 hectares. According to the recent EU Commission estimate, the hectareage planted with sweet lupins is also set to grow 5.7 per cent to 240,000 hectares. By contrast, land dedicated to dry pea production is seen to decline around 3.5 per cent year-on-year to 931,000 hectares in 2024.

Due to the increase in area planted with grain legumes, the 2024 harvests could increase depending on weather conditions. Based on average yields, the soybean harvest could increase around 11 per cent year-on-year to 3.1 million tonnes. On the same assumption, field beans and sweet lupins could also exceed the previous year's results by 10.9 per cent and 3.5 per cent respectively, reaching 1.3 million tonnes and 360,000 tonnes. Whether yield increases will be able to compensate for the decline in dry pea area cannot be said at this point in time. For this reason, the last harvest of approximately 1.9 million tonnes should be used as standard for dry pea output for the time being.

From the perspective of the UFOP, these estimates reflect a positive trend, but not a paradigm shift in farmers' crops preferences for the purposes of a successful EU or national protein plant strategy. Against this background, grain legumes should be appraised properly for their role in enhancing the resilience of crop rotations, mitigating climate change through nitrogen fixation and fostering biodiversity in agrarian landscapes as flowering plants. According to the UFOP, these ecosystem services should be given a "price tag" to reward farmers adequately for producing



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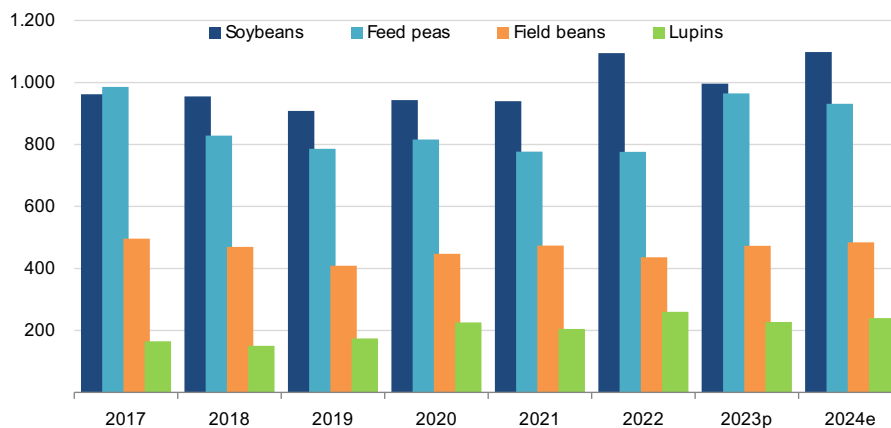
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grain legumes and using them in domestic agriculture. The association has stressed that since at the end of the day consumers decide at the point of sale whether such "binding" land use and services are wanted and therefore rewarded, there is a need for extensive communication efforts with consumers, along with initial financial support. The UFOP has emphasised that the LeguNet demonstration project funded by the German Ministry of Agriculture, in which project the association is involved as a partner, is a pioneering approach for the value chains involved, both in the feed and food sectors, but also highlights the considerable need for action.

Area under cultivation of the most important legumes
in the EU-27, in 1,000 hectares



Source: AMI, EU Commission

Note p = preliminary, e = estimate

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Quick information on UFOP e. V.:

The Union for the Promotion of Oil and Protein Plants e. V. (UFOP) represents the political interests of companies, associations and institutions involved in the production, processing and marketing of domestic oil and protein plants in national and international bodies. UFOP supports research to optimise agricultural production and for the development of new recycling opportunities in the food, non-food and feed sectors. UFOP public relations aim to promote the marketing of domestic oil and protein plant end products.