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ONIONS 2017
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Trends in Cultivation and Production for Europe and the World

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Introduction

After a big crop in 2014/15 the world Onion supply decreased in many regions in 2015/16, which allowed prices to stabilize. 2016/17 sees a return to higher volumes in most of the important onion producing countries. Export oriented countries were looking around the globe for export possibilities. In the first months of the Northern Hemisphere season export possibilities to Western Africa were good, this took a lot of pressure from European markets. But the African markets close in spring in order to protect local production. In this season first measures were already taken earlier than usual in December. So prices came under pressure in December and there is a lot of speculation about market developments in the second half of the season.

Under these circumstances quality issues become very important, especially storability is crucial. This holds true for Japan, where heavy rainfalls before and during harvest could force farmers to sell their crop faster as planned. But also in other regions storability may become a point of discussion.

Political decisions like the Russian embargos – in the case of Turkey the lifting of the embargo – still influence the market to a high degree. However, governments do not seem to be really efficient in their effort to “rule markets”, which should better not be ruled. In India thousands of tons of rotten onions had to be taken out of public stores, where they were brought before in order to stabilize prices. The “demonetization” in India hindered onion sales later. In the EU the discussion about the widely used sprouting inhibitor maleine hydracide puts the onion industry at risk. The British decision to leave the EU and the resulting weakness of the British Pound will also influence trade flows. More isolationist policies of other countries like the US have to be expected as well after the election of president Trump. So the onion market will probably remain exiting!
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