

THE TOMATO PROCESSING INDUSTRY IN FRANCE



PLANTING	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
HARVESTING	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

Production	2013	2014	2015
Volume of tomatoes processed (in metric tonnes)	141 000	180 000	170 000
Surface planted (in hectares)	2 068	2 380	2 618
Average field yield (in t/ha)	68.2	76	66
Average tomato price (for tomato paste in €/t field gate)	81	84	81
Number of growers	178	151	150
Number of processors	12	12	12

In the last few years an average of 190 000 tonnes of tomatoes for processing were produced in France. This volume is much lower than the production peak of 372 000 tonnes in 1999.

There are two main regions of production:

1- The South-East, with 60 to 70% of French production.

In this region centred on the Mediterranean Basin (Vaucluse, Bouches-du-Rhône, Gard, Sud Drome), with peripheral regions (Drôme, Rhone Valley) and to the West (Hérault), there are two main types of farms growing tomatoes for processing:

- Cereal farms where tomatoes are used as part of crop rotations on about 10% - 20% of total acreage.

- Specialised farms, particularly along the Mediterranean coast, growing several dozens of hectares of tomatoes.

The region is characterised by a Mediterranean climate, with hot and dry summers, a low risk of frost in the spring, and dominating winds (Mistral and Tramontane) limiting the length of rainy periods.

2- The South West:

The production area is centred on the Lot-et-Garonne and the surrounding Departements (Landes, Dordogne, Gironde, etc...). Production is developing in the cereal plains of the Lot-and-Garonne, as well as in the Landes. Soils are relatively varied. The climate is milder than in the South-East and predominantly Oceanic. Wet periods last longer and harvest takes place later in the season.

About 150 to 170 growers cultivate 2 500 hectares of tomatoes. Average yields are 75 to 80 t/ha, with variations to up to 100 t/ha in new lands along the seaside, down to 70 t/ha in traditional farms because of limitations due to soil fatigue and crop rotation.

All producers are members of Producers' Organisations which sell the crop for their members and give them technical support. Producer's Organisations are also developing quality assurance labels enabling growers to guarantee the quality and safety of their crop. Using research results and decision-making tools developed by the national inter-professional body SONITO, producers' organisations have implemented Integrated Crop Management methods enabling more respect of the environment and the consumer. IPM crop guides are made available to producers, and field visit and an alert-system enable to limit as much as possible pesticide use. Quality Charters have been implemented in coordination with suppliers.

Most of the tomatoes are processed into tomato paste, with some volumes going into various types of canned tomatoes, juice or frozen tomatoes. Most tomato processors are also involved in second-stage processing of specialty products: hot or cold sauces, ketchup, etc., and rely largely on imports of tomato paste from various origins to cover their needs.

The relationship between Producers' Organisations and Processors are based on the EU Regulation and of inter-professional agreements negotiated within SONITO. These agreements define the minimum production and payment requirements which are included in the individual contracts. The price is however negotiated freely between the contracting parties: it was in the order of 75 to 85 €/t in 2015. Specific clauses can be added to the contract, on top of the minimum requirements negotiated within the inter-professional agreement.



WPTC member (through AMITOM): SONITO

The French tomato growers and processors are represented within AMITOM by SONITO.