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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Various sugar related articles

The Executive Director would like to draw your attention to the articles below all of which are relevant to the sugar sector.

Sugaronline Ebriefing

US: WASDE cuts US 2024/25 sugar supply estimate due to lower imports

The US Department of Agriculture has reduced its projection for US sugar supply in 2024/25 due to lower imports, according to the latest World Agriculture Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) released March 11, reports Sugaronline.

US sugar supply is decreased to 14.317 million short tonnes, raw value (STRV) from 14.393 million previously, on decreases in imports more than offsetting an increase in sugar production. Sugar imports are estimated at 2.779 million STRV, compared to the previous projection of 2.893 million STRV released in February. The most recent sugar import estimate for 2024/25 is also lower than the volume of 3.811 million STRV imported in 2023/24.

Sugar imports from Mexico are projected at 497,000 STRV, compared to 621,000 estimated previously.

US sugar production is expected to increase to 9.408 million, from 9.370 million expected in February, due to higher cane sugar production in Louisiana and an increase in the overall beet sugar production amid a rise in sucrose recovery from sliced beets.

"The increase in recovery is due to the resolution of certain factory problems limiting earlier season production in the Pacific Northwest," according to the WASDE report.

"Sugarbeets remaining to be processed are high in sucrose content and high in juice purity and are storing well. Slicing is expected to extend into May to compensate for earlier difficulties in processing plants."

Processors in the Red River Valley are confident of beet storage conditions being manageable through the rest of the season, according to the report. "Any production problems in Michigan were recognised early on by the processor and incorporated into earlier sugar WASDEs."

AUSTRALIA: Cane farmers welcome increase in disaster funds for flood-affected producers

Sugarcane producers in Australia have welcomed the government's decision to increase disaster recovery funding for primary producers to AUD75,000, allowing growers affected by floods this year to access Category D grants under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA), reports Sugaronline.

"This increase reflects the increasing costs of recovery for growers who have been hit hard by recent flooding and will take years to bounce back," said the chief executive officer (CEO) of Queensland's sugarcane producers' association Canegrowers, Dan Galligan, in a statement on March 12.

"We've been clear from the beginning that the original $25,000 grant was simply nowhere near enough for the hardest-hit farming businesses. This boost will make a real difference for those struggling to rebuild."

He also welcomed recent updates to disaster funding regulations, which formalise new rules allowing growers to use recovery grants for replanting lost crops.

"This increase and the inclusion of replant costs are crucial steps forward, but this will be a long recovery that will need on-ground resources for several years," he said.

The Queensland Cane Agriculture and Renewables (QCAR) has also welcomed the decision, adding that the higher-level grants would be life-changing for sugarcane farmers and primary producers who had collectively taken a financial hit of hundreds of millions of dollars from recent floods.

"The grants of up to $75,000 will go a long way to easing the financial and emotional burdens of farmers, their families, and let's not forget, the communities they live in and work in," QCAR Herbert District Manager Lawrence Di Bella said in a separate statement.

"There were craters the size of swimming pools, tonnes of trash dumped on newly planted sugarcane, headlands washed away, trees uprooted, new creeks carved through fields, dead calves littering paddocks; the list goes on."

AUSTRIA: Agrana ceases production at two sugar factories

Agrana announced on March 12 that its supervisory board approved the termination of sugar production at its site in Leopoldsdorf im Marchfeld, Austria, and at its unit in Hrusovany, Czech Republic, with immediate effect, reports Sugaronline.

"Rising production costs, increasing competition due to a decline in sugar consumption across the EU, market liberalisation (Mercosur agreement, sugar imports from Ukraine), and regulatory requirements have made it economically unviable to continue production at two sites in both Austria and the Czech Republic," the company said in a statement.

The company said the sugar market does not allow for the production volumes "that would make the operation of the affected sites viable in the medium term, let alone the long term."

In Austria, Agrana's entire domestic sugar production will be concentrated at the Tulln site. In the Czech Republic, Agrana's sugar production will be concentrated in Opava.

The Leopoldsdorf site in Austria will remain a logistics hub, with sugar to be stored in the existing silos and to be packaged there.

"Regarding potential opportunities for further economic use of the 70-hectare company site, Agrana is developing additional future scenarios for the factory premises in the short term," the company said.

Agrana said the decision to close the two sugar factories is part of its strategic realignment, with the aim of achieving long-term stabilisation and competitiveness of domestic sugar production.

"It was a difficult but unavoidable decision to close two production sites, especially because we are committed to sugar production in Central and Eastern Europe," said Agrana chief executive officer (CEO) Stephan Büttner.

"By focusing on our site in Tulln, we want to create a stable and lasting basis for a sustainable Austrian production. Our aim is to make Austria a robust sugar production location."

The closures of the two factories affect about 270 employees, of which 120 in Leopoldsdorf and 150 in Hrušovany.

US: Florida cane growers cooperative funds research on AI-based system to automate harvest

The Sugar Cane Growers Cooperative of Florida (SCGC) is funding a research project led by the Mississippi State University's Agricultural Autonomy Institute (AAI) focused on the development of technology-based solutions for streamlining sugarcane harvesting procedures, reports Sugaronline.

A team of scientists from AAI and the university's Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station (MAFES) will produce a AI-based system to automate and synchronise conventional sugarcane harvesting machinery, according to a statement released by the MSU on March 11.

SCGC, a cooperative comprised of 39 member-growers covering 80,00 acres in Florida's Everglades Agricultural Area, is funding the project at US$985,000. The cooperative produces over 400,000 metric tonnes of raw sugar annually.

The MSU team will initially build and test the AI-driven automation system in the lab, followed by]in-field tests of the system integrated into the harvesting equipment at AAI's Autonomous Acres Proving Ground, which is part of the MAFES R.R. Foil Plant Science Research Center.

The equipment will be delivered to Florida for final testing and optimisation by early 2027.

"SCGC's strategic partnership with Mississippi State University will be a game-changer," said SCGC vice president of Agricultural Operations Baxter Clark in the statement released by MSU. "I'm confident it will lead to a significant step forward for autonomous sugarcane harvesting.

FoodNavigator.com

Powering personalized nutrition: How better data is expanding access

Advancing data quality is making personalized nutrition more accessible and convenient
https://www.foodnavigator-usa.com/Article/2025/03/12/improving-data-quality-drives-personalized-nutrition-segment/

How Coca-Cola creates billion dollar brands

The Coca-Cola Company now boasts 30 billion-dollar brands: from classics such as Coca-Cola and Sprite to newer winners like Smartwater, Fairlife and Fuze Tea. How does it create billion dollar brands?
https://www.foodnavigator-usa.com/Article/2025/03/11/coca-colas-billion-dollar-brands-sprite-fanta-maaza-more/

Natural food and beverage industry braces for uncertainty under Trump

Trade tensions and the associated supply chain implications were top concerns among those attending the 2025 Natural Products Expo West Conference
https://www.foodnavigator-usa.com/Article/2025/03/11/cpg-industry-tackles-trade-challenges-at-expo-west/

How can F&B stay ahead of shifting sustainability legislation?

How food and drink businesses can stay ahead of the curve while sustainability legislation shifts
https://www.foodnavigator.com/Article/2025/03/10/what-sustainability-legislation-is-causing-fb-issues/

ED & F Man Daily Research

World food prices rose in February on back of sugar rush, UN's FAO says - Reuters - Global food commodity prices rose in February, driven by higher sugar, dairy, and vegetable oil prices, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations said on Friday. The FAO Food Price Index, which tracks monthly changes in international prices of globally traded food commodities, averaged 127.1 points last month, up 1.6% from January and 8.2% from February 2024. The jump was largely driven by sugar prices, which shot up 6.6% month-on-month, pushed higher by concerns over tighter global supplies for the 2024/25 season, partly because of unfavourable weather conditions in Brazil. Dairy prices increased 4% from January, with all major dairy products rising, spurred on by strong import demand which exceeded production in key exporting regions. Vegetable oil prices rose 2% month-on-month and 29.1% year-on-year, largely due to higher prices for palm, soy, and sunflower oils, driven by supply constraints in Southeast Asia and strong demand from the biodiesel sector.
