

## Farmers propose to authorities implementation of a National Strategic Potato Plan to save sector

**The Romanian Farmers Club and the Romanian National Potato Federation propose to the authorities the implementation of a National Strategic Potato Plan, to save an economic sector in great difficulty and harmonise the trade balance, which now registers a deficit of 60 pct, the representatives of the two organizations say.**

The main limiting factors in potato cultivation in Romania are excessive division of the land, often low technical level, small size of agricultural holdings, poor quality of seeding material and, above all, lack of adequate storage space.

"Romania should hold the second place at European level in terms of the arable area for potato cultivation, but the low yield and lack of individual warehouses of the Romanian farmers cannot give us this prestigious position in the continental ranking. Unfortunately, Romanian potato producers have to sell their production immediately after harvest at low prices, due to the lack of storage space in optimal conditions throughout the year. In this way, massive potato imports take place in our country every year," said Laszlo Becsek, vice-president of the Romanian Farmers Club.

According to a release of the two organizations sent to AGERPRES, the Romanian Farmers Club and the National Potato Federation had a first meeting with the Minister of Agriculture, Adrian-Nechita Oros, in which the proposal for the implementation of a National Strategic Potato Plan was presented.

The two organisations argued for the need for the ministry to re-analyze the partial distribution of the amounts allocated to the support coupled to the early potato measure for industrialization and the seed potato. The Club and the Federation carried out an analysis in this regard and provided the ministry with detailed economic and technical data.

"We believe that the repeated redistribution, each year, of the amounts allocated to this crop to other measures seriously harms potato growers, very few in fact, growers who have already suffered significant losses to the potato crop for consumption, sold in 2020 below the cost price. The low price of potato for consumption will also be directly reflected on the few seed potato producers left in Romania, who are practically without customers and are in danger of drastically reducing the area forecast for the current year," says Romulus Oprea, president of the Potato National Federation in Romania.

The two organisations are asking the ministry to analyse the very short-term predictable major impact on this staple food, which is already in decline, with the areas cultivated with potato in a continuous decline over the past 8 years, according to APIA (Agency of Payments and Intervention in Agriculture) data. In these conditions, potato cultivation being unprofitable, Romania will become even more dependent on imports, the share at the current level being about 50 pct, with visible consequences within the trade balance at the national level. With regard to the seed potato of higher biological categories (Elite and Super Elite), the import already represents a share of more than 95 pct.

The two organizations maintain that Romanian producers are the only ones able to work to harmonise the trade balance on this culture, while being able to obtain higher commercial income, a very important aspect concerning the contribution to the state budget.