Maize acreage in the north much faster than nationwide

The maize acreage shrinks in the Netherlands. At the national level, the maize acreage is this year about 7 to 8 percent lower than in 2015. Which say different specialists. In the northern part of the Netherlands, we see a rapid decline in maize acreage for years. Besides the derogation, the low milk prices and the phosphate rights, the acreage of beets also plays a role in this shrinkage.

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The maize acreage in the Netherlands is decreasing already for years, especially in the northern part of the Netherlands. Ten years ago we grew 43.728 hectares of maize in the north, according to figures from CBS. After a rebound in 2012 with 48.782 hectares of maize, CBS finds yet another decline. This time, a decline that lasts longer. In 2015 we still grew 43.817 hectares of maize in the north. Compared to 2012, this is a decrease of 10,18 percent.

You can see a shrinking of the maize acreage in the rest of the country as well. In 2012, the national level of grown maize was 231.811 hectares of maize, last year the acreage was only 223.855 hectares, a decline of 7.956 hectares. According to the CBS the maize acreage is far from the level of 2006 where the figures are estimated at 218.036 hectares of maize. "The maize acreage will probably shrink another several percents after which the area finally stagnates ', expects Luuk Uelderink, regional manager northern Netherlands at KWS Benelux.

The reason that the maize acreage also has shrunk again this year, is partly due to the increase in sugar beet acreage, says Uelderink. "The area of sugar beet this year has increased by 12.500 hectares due to the improving sugar market." Cosun advised farmers not to sow too tight sugar beet because of the loss of the sugar quota in 2017 and the fact that 2016 is the base year for the supply rights from 2017. The full supply of the allocation in 2016 is important for future grow opportunities.

According to Uelderink this does not only cause this displacement effect for this shrinkage, but the low prices of milk also affect this. "The option to purchase maize is still viewed critically because of low milk prices, with the result that growing maize for sale is less popular. What may be of great influence are the phosphate rights. Dairy farmers will have to shed cows because of the phosphate rights which means that less food is needed, " says Uelderink.

Jos Groot Koerkamp, commercial manager at Limagrain, does, however, not think that the low prices of milk affect the maize acreage. "Feed technically, maize is a good crop that fits well in the ration of dairy cattle. Maize is still the main energy supplier. You can grow or purchase it yourself, but growing it yourself is the cheapest and most efficient way. However, I expect that the phosphate rights affect the maize acreage, " says Groot Koerkamp.

Derogation

Uelderink and Groot Koerkamp agree that the maize acreage is affected by the derogation. Farms that want to meet the derogation should ensure that the agricultural land consists of 80 percent grass and 20 percent maize. Until 2013 the rule was 70 to 30 percent.

Another issue that may have some influence on the total maize acreage is the subsidence of the peat soil. Groot Koerkamp states however that this has little effect on the maize acreage. "Growers on land where subsidence is an issue work consciously with rotation or strips cultivation. Strips cultivation is designed to maintain the capacity of the soil, so that the soil does not drop through the operation of the land and the heavy machinery. "

But that still does not comply strips cultivation. 'Strips cultivation helps maintain the soil, but the costs do not weigh against the revenue that is generated by this crop, " says Groot Koerkamp.

Henk Pol, creator and developer of the strip mill, disagrees with that. He argues that strips cultivation leads to equal or greater yields and expects an increase in strips cultivation in the coming years. "In recent years it has become clear that we need to till the soil less to prevent further subsidence," says Pol. "This year the acreage of strips cultivation shrank in the Netherlands but that has nothing to do with technology. This is mainly due to the liquidity position in the dairy sector. Strips cultivation is not new, but not many farmers apply this cultivation technique. At a time when the finances do not allow it, you're less likely to apply a new system. "

As well as strips cultivation, maize under film is a cultivation technique that apparently does not push through. Hein-Willem Leeraar, who brought the cultivation technique to the Netherlands in 2009, says that assumption is not correct. He argues correctly that maize under film increases in recent years. "Until 2012 the area maize under film grew to more than 1.000 hectares nationwide, but fell sharply after the wet spring in 2012. Then came the improvement points in order," Leeraar knows. According to him, the acreage of maize under film grows around 2 to 3 per cent at the national level every year now. In the north, it grows about 1,5 percent annually. "Despite the 300 euro cost per hectare, you realize higher yields. You can start earlier with sowing, the maize germinates earlier and you have 1.000 kilos extra starch per hectare. "

Maize bales

Another phenomenon are the maize bales. Willy Verstraaten from Wanroy has experience with the pressing of maize bales since 2001. Now he travels throughout the Netherlands. "Especially contractors and farmers with a surplus let the maize press into bales, to sell these bales. Thus they create a new market, " says Verstraaten.

The price of maize bales varies between 60 and 80 euros per bale. The bales with 36 percent dry matter weigh around 950 kilograms. "A maize bale of 1.000 kilograms is too wet," says Verstraaten. "A dry matter percentage of 36 to 42 is optimal. This maize is fully mature and has the highest percentage of starch. "

According to Uelderink and Groot Koerkamp dairy farmers do not believe in maize bales. "Maize bales are too expensive," says Uelderink. "Think about the cost of the plastic and the contractor you should hire.' Groot Koerkamp: "Especially horse and goat farmers buy maize bales, because they have a low feed rate, but this is less interesting for dairy farmers. In maize bales you have fewer problems with overheating, but when you ride the maize silage solid into the silo, you also have a little chance of overheating," he says.

Verstraaten "Feeding maize bales should suit your business and the feed rate. At a higher feed rate it is less interesting, but farmers with a low feed rate who silage maize often suffer from overheating. That's a shame, because the nutritional value of maize then goes backwards and that affects the feed efficiency. "

[Framework]

Higher feed efficiency by maize bales

Dairy farmer Ad Konijn (66) from Wijdewormer feeds his 60 dairy cows maize bales for several years. "It works great," says the farmer. "Previously, I had problems with overheating, but since I feed maize bales, I never had any more trouble. Cows eat maize well, so the feed efficiency is higher. I feed the maize bales only in the fall, winter and spring. My cows are given a half to a whole bale a day." Konijn buys annually about 100 pieces maize bales from Firma Van der Wal from Creil. "The maize bales cost about 68 euros per bale. It is more expensive, but the maize is and remains a good quality because it is hermetically sealed. " Previously Konijn grew maize himself, but he stopped due to the disappointing results. "Maybe I'll do it in the future again, but the maize bales also suit me fine."