

**Voluntary Report** – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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**Report Number:** NL2024-0013

**Report Name:** Fewer Fruits per Tree Due To Unfavorable Growing Conditions

**Country:** Netherlands

**Post:** The Hague

**Report Category:** Agricultural Situation, Fresh Deciduous Fruit, Special Certification - Organic/Kosher/Halal

**Prepared By:** Marcel Pinckaers

**Approved By:** Laura Geller

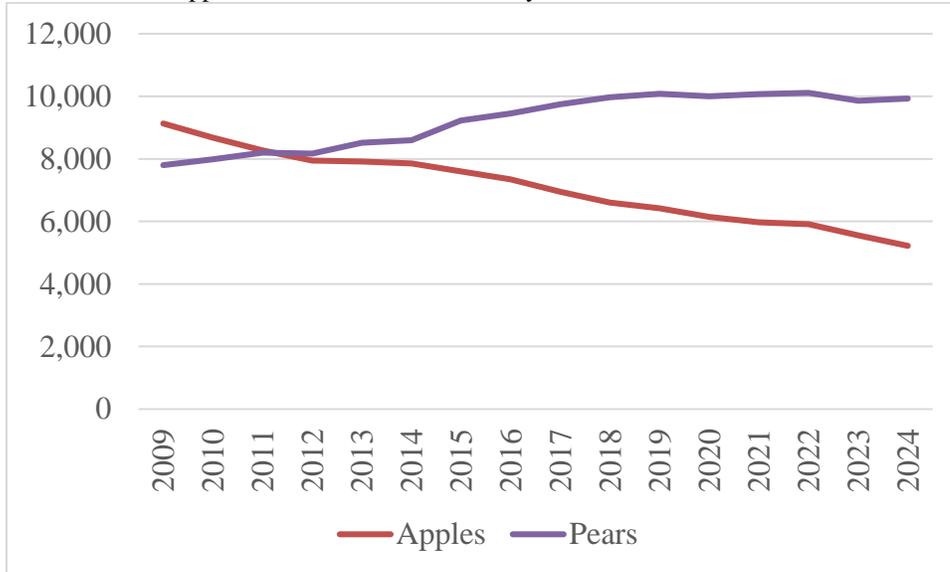
**Report Highlights:**

This year's apple harvest is expected to be 197,000 MT, slightly lower than last year's numbers and the lowest in a decade. Pear production is set to drop by around nine percent, with a total of 327,000 MT. The decrease in pear harvest is mostly due to tough growing conditions throughout the season, leading to fewer fruits per tree. When it comes to the land being harvested, apple acreage is shrinking further, down to about 5,220 hectares. Pear acreage, however, is holding steady at roughly 10,000 hectares. In terms of varieties, Elstar apples and Conference pears are the top picks in the Netherlands. There's also growing interest in club varieties and several supermarket chains are now even offering their own branded apples, grown exclusively for them. Most Dutch apples stay within the Netherlands (85-90 percent of the total production), while Dutch pears—along with Belgian pears—are leading the charge in EU pear exports. By far most Dutch pears stay in the EU.

### Apple Acreage Decline in the Netherlands

About 25 years ago, apple orchards in the Netherlands covered around 15,000 hectares. Fast forward to today, and that number has dwindled to an estimated 5,220 hectares—a five percent drop from last year alone. Unfortunately, this downward trend isn't expected to slow anytime soon. Several factors contribute to this decline, including disappointing profits over the past decade, lack of generational interest in running family farms, increasing difficulties with pesticide use, and the tough investment decisions orchard owners face when it's time to replant.

Chart 1. Dutch Apple and Pear Area Harvested by Year in Hectare



Source: [Central Bureau of Statistics](#) and [Royal Dutch Fruit Growers Organization](#)

### Pear Acreage: A Different Story

On the other hand, pears have had a different journey. While there were only about 6,000 hectares of pear orchards 25 years ago, that number jumped to around 10,000 hectares by 2018, where it has held steady since. This year, pear orchards are expected to cover 9,930 hectares. Over 1,100 companies in the Netherlands grow pears, with an average farm size of 8.7 hectares. Around 40 percent of these farmers also grow other fruits like apples, cherries, and plums.

Picture 1. *Conference* Pears Orchards



Source: [Royal Dutch Fruit Growers Organization](#)

## 2024 Apple and Pear Production

Dutch apple production this year is projected to be around 197,000 Metric Tons (MT), which is similar to last year, but also a 10 year low. The decrease in harvested area and some uncooperative weather—cold and wet spells—are to blame. Harvesting began in mid-August.

*Elstar* apples are still the favorite, making up 43 percent of the crop, with an expected harvest of 84,000 MT, an 11 percent increase from last year. *Jonagold*, including its variant *Jonagored*, follows with an estimated 45,000 MT, then *Kanzi* with 15,000 MT, and *Rode Boskoop* with 9,000 MT.

Table 1. Dutch Commercial Appel and Pear Production by Year in '000 MT

	2022	2023	2024
<b>Total Apples</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>197</b>
- <i>Elstar</i>	89	76	84
- <i>Jonagold</i>	56	48	45
- <i>Kanzi</i>	18	18	15
- <i>Rode Boskoop</i>	14	10	9
- <i>Wellant</i>	7	6	5
- <i>Golden Delicious</i>	7	5	4
- <i>Junami</i>	7	6	4
-Other	37	30	31
<b>Total Pears</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>358</b>	<b>327</b>
- <i>Conference</i>	269	274	258
- <i>Beurré Alexander Lucas</i>	23	19	16
- <i>Xenia</i>	11	14	15
- <i>Doyenné du Comice</i>	24	26	14
- <i>Migo</i>	7	8	7
- <i>Sweet Sensation</i>	8	5	5
-Other	10	12	12

Source: [Central Bureau of Statistics](#), [Royal Dutch Fruit Growers Organization](#), and [Fresh Produce Centre](#).

For pears, production is expected to total 327,000 MT, down almost nine percent from last year. The *Conference* variety dominates, making up over three-quarters of the pear harvest, estimated at 258,000 MT, which is six percent lower than last year. Other popular varieties like *Beurré Alexander Lucas*, *Xenia*, and *Doyenné du Comice* are grown too, but in much smaller quantities. Due to the erratic spring weather, there are now fewer pears on the trees.

## Organic Production Remains Low

With just four percent of apples (around 8,000 MT) and two percent of pears (about 6,500 MT) the production of organically grown apples and pears in the Netherlands remains low. Growing organic apples and pears isn't easy, due to new pests, diseases, changing weather, and quality issues - all of which make it tough to achieve good prices.

## The Growing Season...So Far

The growing season started with a warm March, leading to plenty of blossoms on apple and pear trees. However, April brought frost and hail, affecting the orchards. “The season was marked by cold and wet weather, though things improved in July and August, allowing the fruit to grow larger. Fortunately, there were no heatwaves or droughts this year.” Says Wilco van den Berg of [Fresh Produce Centre](#).

## Apple and Pear Consumption Trends

Apple and pear consumption is on the decline, with per capita consumption dropping considerably over the past decade. Consumers are opting for more exotic and luxurious fruits like berries, pineapple, mango, and melon. To cater to this trend, food distributors are now offering single-serve fruit salads that are convenient for home or on-the-go.

Despite these changes, apples are still the second most popular fruit (after bananas), and pears rank tenth. About 20 percent of the population eats an apple every day, while only five percent do the same with pears. Most apples and pears are eaten at home, typically as an afternoon snack, and are bought at local food retailers, fruit and vegetable specialty shops, or street markets. The main reasons why consumers eat apples and pears are: health benefits, freshness, easy to eat, healthy alternative to confectionery products, biscuits, or desserts, and because they are nutritious.

Picture 2. A Selection of Fruit Offerings by Dutch Retailers



Source: <https://www.ah.nl/producten/aardappel-groente-fruit/fruitsalade> and <https://www.jumbo.com/producten/aardappelen.-groente-en-fruit/fruit/>

Young people, on the contrary, who already eat the least amount of fruit, are gravitating towards snack products like confectionery, biscuits, and flavored drinks. The hassle of peeling or cutting fresh fruit, combined with price and any inconvenience of eating it are common reasons for this shift.

An estimated 85-90 percent of all apples produced in the Netherlands, end up on the local fresh consumer market. These varieties are also the most eaten apples in the Netherlands. The most eaten apple, grown outside the Netherlands, is *Pink Lady*. The *Conference* pear continues to be the popular pear among the Dutch.

## Distribution

Whereas apples are mainly sold on the domestic market, Dutch pears are not only produced for the European Union (EU) market but also for markets outside the EU. Ten to 20 percent of Dutch pears on average end up being exported to Belarus, Kazakhstan, as well as the UK, Norway, and China.

Brexit hasn't yet disrupted pear trade, as Dutch traders are well-prepared for the additional paperwork. However, this could change when the UK introduces new phytosanitary certification obligations and physical checks in June 2025.

### Supermarket Brands

Gone are the days when apples like Elstar, Granny Smith, and Royal Gala were the only stars on the supermarket shelves. Now, club varieties like Pink Lady® and Kanzi® are shaking things up. But that's not all – supermarkets are rolling out their own unique varieties that you will only find at their stores.

[Superunie](#) members and [Albert Heijn](#) have already been stocking Morgana and [Sprank](#) apples for a while now. And just last fall, [Jumbo](#) made a splash with the introduction of [Tessa](#). These apples are all about being sweet, juicy, and sporting a red blush.

Picture 3. TV Commercial Introducing *Tessa*



Source: [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

Retailers Albert Heijn and Jumbo are working with local growers to make sure these apples are proudly shown as Dutch. Plus, this gives supermarkets a chance to stand out and maybe even set prices that give them a better profit margin.

### The Future of Apple and Pear Cultivation

In southern and eastern Europe, apple and pear cultivation is under pressure due to changing and unpredictable weather conditions like frost, droughts, heatwaves, and hailstorms. Meanwhile, production in northwest Europe, including the Netherlands, is less affected. The future of apple and pear production in the Netherlands will hinge on profitability, ongoing uncertainties around pesticide use, and the challenges of business succession within farming families.

**Attachments:**

No Attachments.