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## Sweden

### Fresh Potatoes

## Sweden to import potatoes this winter 1998

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#### **Report Highlights:**

**Imports of fresh potatoes to Sweden will rise this winter as production is expected to be 10 per cent down.**

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Includes PSD changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
Unscheduled Report  
Stockholm [SW1], SW

**Sweden to import potatoes this winter**

The area devoted to table potatoes in Sweden stood at just under 25,000 ha. in 1998 — lower than any previous years during the 1990's. Several consecutive years of poor profitability have discouraged farmers, whose normal annual output stands at approximately 866,000 tons. Swedish Board of Agriculture sources report that 1998 crop yields will likely be down 10% and tentatively place estimated production in a range of between 750-820,000 tons. In addition to weather-related shortfalls, the Board also reports significant losses due to late blight, but individual farm unit output will vary considerably; with some farmers cultivating mainly on sandy soils expecting record yields with others unable able to harvest due to wet field conditions.

Direct fresh potato consumption has decreased in recent years to roughly 500,000 tons. However, a total harvest of 800,000 tons is considered necessary in order to avoid shortages on the domestic market; hence, it seems likely that Sweden will have to import more table potatoes to cover this year's domestic requirements.

Sweden imported 89,700 tons of fresh potatoes in 1995 and 75,598 tons in 1996. Imports dropped sharply in 1997 to 32,798 tons. Imported processed potato products were valued at roughly SEK 300 million (USD 37.5 million) per annum over the past three years. The U.S. ranks fourth on the 1997 list of exporting countries having exported processed potato products valued at SEK 17.3 million. The bulk of imports originate from the Netherlands.

Swedish potato growers have the option to market their produce with the well established label “Svenskodlat” (Swedish grown). A market study in 1997 found that 56% Swedes are prepared to pay 10% more for labeled products; hence, such labelling will most likely be used more widely given the increase in imports in order to elevate the "visibility" of domestically grown potatoes.

The situation for industrial potatoes is different to that of table potatoes. Industrial potatoes are produced only in the southernmost counties and all production is undertaken on contract. In most of this area the yields are expected to be somewhat above average.