

Update

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Beacon Commodities



We have just returned from a very wet and cold trip to Belgium to look at this year's angelica root harvest. The trip took us to see a number of suppliers and we can safely say that Belgium is about as wet as England and therefore we can sympathise with what the Belgium Farmers have to deal with.



TPH inspecting the root after drying but before cutting



The cut root bagged prior to distribution

Angelica as a crop

Angelica is usually planted anywhere between June and August. The seed does not germinate easily with an average germination success of 1 in every 100 seeds. The root is harvested the following year between November and February (18 months after planting) but this is highly dependent on weather conditions. The plant used to grow angelica seed is left for two years before harvesting between July and August (24 months after planting). It is also not



possible to harvest both the seed and the root from the same plant as the root deteriorates quickly once the seed has been harvested. Within Belgium, angelica forms part of a rotation with other common agricultural crops, such as, sugar beet, wheat, maize and potatoes.

Harvesting angelica root

A beet harvester is used to harvest the angelica root and it is vital that the ground conditions are not too wet as the tractor will sink into the 'very wet Belgium mud'. Similarly, it is important to harvest the root before the frost sets in. This is because the angelica root starts to deteriorate within the frozen ground, as it eats away at its own sugars and energy supplies in order to survive. This in turn damages the root and affects the oil content and quality of the crop.

The harvested root is then put within a spinner to clear excess mud before being washed in water. The root is then dried for anywhere between 4-10 days depending on the moisture content. The dried root is then cut into varying sizes before being bagged for distribution.

The 2015 crop

Early indications are that the quality of the Belgium crop is good and as long as the rain and the frost hold off (the rain was certainly doing its best to disrupt the harvest during our visit) then average yields will be enjoyed if the crop can be harvested into January and possibly February 2015.