

Cabbage crops

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Cabbage is one of the main vegetable crops. It belongs to the family Cruciferae, genus Brassica, which includes about 50 different species. The best known are: head cabbage, napa cabbage, Chinese cabbage, etc. Varieties of head cabbage are Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, broccoli, kale and others.

The place of origin of cabbage is Europe. It originates from wild leaf cabbage, distributed in the Mediterranean region and in Western Europe. In Ancient Greece it was used as food, as well as for the treatment of skin diseases and wounds. The ancient Romans ascribed to it a divine origin and consumed it abundantly as food and medicine. According to some sources, the Celts were the first to start cultivating it in 1000 BC in Central and Western Europe, while according to others – the ancient Iberians inhabiting present-day Spain. Later it was introduced into Greece, Egypt and Rome. On the Balkan Peninsula it became known during the first years of the Common Era. In antiquity it was believed that cabbage possesses medicinal properties and it was regarded as divine food. According to the ancient Greek mathematician Pythagoras, "cabbage is a vegetable that maintains

constant alertness and a cheerful state of mind". Because of its high vitamin C content it is called the "northern lemon". The amount of this vitamin in white head cabbage is as much as in citrus fruits, and in broccoli, cauliflower and Brussels sprouts it is nearly twice as high. Its low caloric value defines it as a preferred dietary food.

Cabbage is a vegetable with excellent taste qualities. It is used all year round because it is easy to store. It is rich in amino acids, sugars, nitrogen compounds, mineral salts and vitamins. It contains on average 92% water, from 2.6 to 8% sugars, 1.4% proteins, 0.6% mineral salts (potassium, calcium, phosphorus, sulfur, sodium, chlorine, magnesium, iron, traces of iodine, manganese) as well as other microelements. Potassium salts are much more abundant than sodium salts, which prevents water retention in the body. The highest content of proteins, sugars and vitamins is found in the inner leaves and the core of the cabbage. The cellulose content is about 0.8%. Cabbage also contains various enzymes and vitamins. Vitamin C is on average 40 mg%. Vitamins B1 and B2 are found in significant quantities. Cabbage is also a good source of vitamin B6 and folic acid. Carotene is found mainly in the outer leaves with a greenish tint. The phytoncides of cabbage have bactericidal medicinal properties. White cabbage alone contains vitamin U.

Cabbage is very beneficial in the treatment of ulcers, certain types of cancer, depression, for strengthening the immune system and protection against colds. It can accelerate the process of healing of wounds and damaged tissues, regulates the proper functioning of the nervous system and reduces the effects of a number of degenerative diseases.

In addition to white, there are red and purple varieties. In the Mediterranean region, naturally growing cabbage can still be found along the coast.

Under the conditions in Bulgaria early, medium-early and late cabbage are grown. By size of harvested area it ranks fourth after tomatoes, peppers and watermelons.

According to FAO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, the production of brassica crops is about 70 million t per year. As a result of the growing needs of the population and changing diets, cabbage production in the world is continuously increasing – by more than 20–25%. Half of it – about 50% – is produced in China, where Chinese cabbage is the most popular vegetable. Second, with 12%, is India. Cabbage occupies 3.8 million ha in about 150 countries around the world. The highest yields are achieved in South Korea – 71.188 t/ha, followed by Ireland – 68.888 t/ha, and Japan – 67.647 t/ha. More than 20 million t of broccoli and 1.6 million t of cauliflower are produced annually worldwide. The largest producers of these brassica crops are China and India (about 74% of global production), followed by Spain, Mexico, Italy, France, the USA, Poland, Pakistan and Egypt.

Cabbage consumption varies widely across the world. There is no exact information for individual countries, but it is considered that the highest annual per capita consumption is in Russia – 20 kg.

In Bulgaria, the production of brassica crops has fluctuated greatly in recent years in terms of area and total output. Until 2010, they were grown on 2093–3304 ha. The yield was from 50,000 to 78,939 t. After 2011, the

trend has been downward, but interest in broccoli and cauliflower has increased.

Cabbage is grown in all regions of Bulgaria. The largest producer is the South-Central region. Cabbage is very beneficial in the treatment of ulcers, certain types of cancer, depression, for strengthening the immune system and protection against colds. It can accelerate the process of healing of wounds and damaged tissues, regulates the proper functioning of the nervous system and reduces the effects of a number of degenerative diseases.