

OATS-MOSTLY YOSHON IN THE UPCOMING SEASON?

From Rabbi Y Hermon, May 8, 2016.

A short while ago, in an earlier Chodosh Bulletin, I suggested that this coming Chodosh season perhaps most of the oats used in the USA may be Yoshon, having been planted before the deadline before pesach, due to the lateness of pesach on the solar calendar. It now seems that this prediction was not accurate.

The raw data from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) indicated that about 65% of the US oats crop was planted by 2 days before pesach (3 days before “yom hanaf”, the second day of pesach). Since there are 2 opinions in halacha of the deadline for planting in order for the crop to be considered Yoshon, either 2 weeks or 3 days before the “yom hanaf”, it was thought based on the USDA data that most of the oats used should be Yoshon in the coming year, at least according to the second opinion. That preliminary hope overlooked two vital facts: (1) much of the oats grown in the US is used for animal feed and (2) much of the oats used for human consumption is imported to the US from Canada. In Canada virtually all of the oats are planted later than in the US, after pesach.

It is difficult to find hard data for how much of the oats planted in each state in the US is used for animal feed. However, it is a general consensus that this practice is common. Some data points of % planted for animal feed: Texas almost 100% (Texas has the most area in the US planted with oats), North Dakota=33% (2nd most area for oats), Nebraska=90%. With this fact factored in, it appears that considerably less than 50% of the oats planted in the US for human food consumption will be Yoshon this coming season. Add to this the fact that it is common practice to use large amounts of Canadian oats for cereals produced in the US, PLUS that very little old oats are stored from earlier years. Therefore, my earlier suggestion of hoping for most of the oats being Yoshon during the coming year is not correct.

For spring wheat and barley, even the raw USDA data indicated that most of the new crop was planted after pesach, making them “rov” Chodosh.

My thanks to Rabbi A. Schreiber for pointing out to me the animal feed situation, and to Rabbi D. Gorelik for reminding me of the Canadian imports.