

Horticultural peat in agriculture

Market trends, self-sufficiency and the CAP:
what they mean for the peat industry

EPKK: a joint voice for agri-food and rural sectors in Estonia and the EU

~30,000

members, directly and via member organisations

Farmers and their co-operatives

Food processing industries

Rural economy and agribusiness companies

Private forest owners



- Mission: We work to ensure that Estonia's renewable natural resources are used efficiently and sustainably to create value.
- Input to draft legislation, ministries and the Estonian Parliament
- Represents members' interests in Estonia and at EU level
- Works closely with the Estonian Peat Association

Large EU market, small and diverging Baltic base

€71.5 bn

EU vegetables and horticultural products
2023: 13.3% of agricultural output, the
highest-value crop group

38%

Estonia's self-sufficiency in fresh
vegetables 2022: 44,000 t grown against
116,000 t consumed

+6% / -2%

EU harvest 2024 vs 2023: vegetables 62.2
Mt (incl. melons); fruit 24.3 Mt (excl.
citrus, grapes, strawberries)

Estonia
€60 m

3200 ha potato area 2024, half of 2014;
open-field vegetables 1,650 ha

Latvia
€90 m

vegetable production 2020–24 (159 $\searrow$ 108
kt); per capita 84 $\searrow$ 58 kg

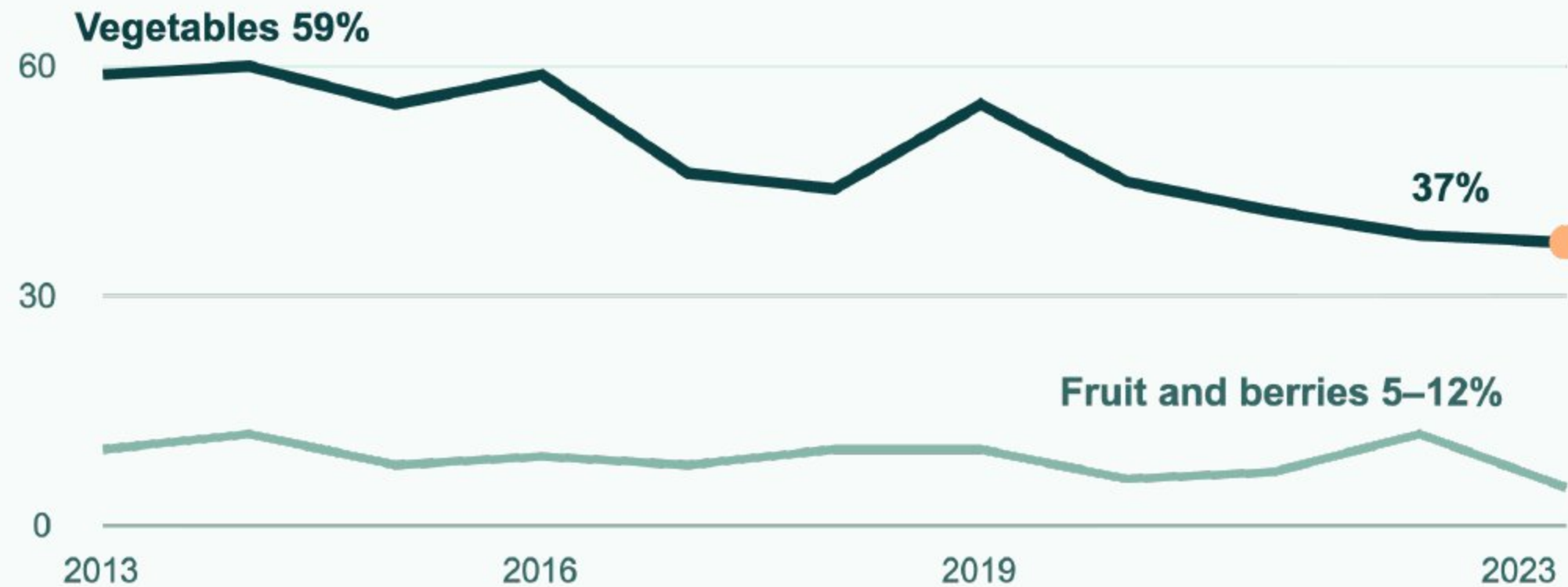
Lithuania
€216 m

vegetable production 2018–22 (213 $\searrow$ 267
kt); 94 kg per capita

SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Estonia covers just over a third of its fresh vegetable use, and the gap is widening

Self-sufficiency in Estonia, % (2013–2023)



Potatoes: 59–69% in 2020–2023 (Ministry, based on Statistics Estonia).



Why raising it matters

- Estonia is self-sufficient in grain and milk; fresh vegetables are the weak spot
- Supply shocks hit prices of import-dependent food hardest
- The aim is year-round supply in segments where it is realistic

Self-sufficiency = domestic production ÷ domestic use. Source: Statistics Estonia via Ministry (read from chart; 2023 provisional).

WHERE DEMAND ARISES

Higher self-sufficiency creates growing media demand only in some segments

Production line	Raising self-sufficiency	Key precondition	Growing media need
Storage vegetables: cabbage, carrot, beetroot	Realistic	Storage, grading, producer organisation	Low (propagation)
Greenhouse cucumber and tomato	Partly	Energy price, lighting, capital	High
Strawberry, raspberry on substrate or in tunnels	Partly	Labour, plant health, market access	High
Nurseries and young plants	Market-driven	Construction and landscaping demand	Very high
Apple	Limited	Long investment cycle, spring frost	Low

The annual rate hides seasonality: in autumn cabbage covers demand, in spring the market relies on imports.

Analyst assessment. Cabbage 35%, carrot 32% of Estonian open-field vegetable output 2022 (Statistics Estonia).

Three trends change how vegetable, berry and nursery growers produce

1 • RESOURCE EFFICIENCY

+50% / +60%

water- and nutrient-use efficiency when drain water is recirculated. Growers need uniform substrate for automated irrigation.



2 • GREENHOUSE ENERGY

−40%

lighting energy when LEDs replace sodium lamps. Heating needs rise, so net greenhouse savings are 10–25%.



3 • SUBSTRATE SUPPLY RISK

17 million m³

possible global shortfall of growing-media constituents by 2050 (low-availability scenario). Wood fibre also goes to energy.



CHALLENGES

Growers' constraints become supplier risks

3rd

very difficult year in a row for crop growers (2025); loss c. €100 m

€3.3 m

EU-backed aid for 2023–24 weather losses; another €3.3 m for 2025

–23%

Estonian vegetable harvest 2024 although the area grew

Challenge	Effect on purchasing
Energy	Smaller heated area, shorter season
Labour	Automation-friendly, uniform substrate
Profitability	Price sensitivity, longer payment terms
Plant health	Proven hygiene and certification
Climate risk	Water retention, resilience to drought and waterlogging

Sources: Ministry 2025–2026; Põllumehete Teataja 02/2026; Statistics Estonia 2025; table: analyst assessment.

Sectoral support stays, funding becomes less certain

Status	Content
In force	CAP Strategic Plan 2023–2027
Proposal 07/2025	NRP Fund €865 bn; $\geq$ €300 bn ring-fenced: income support $\geq$ €293.7 bn, Unity Safety Net €6.3 bn. Fruit and vegetable sectoral interventions remain, without dedicated funding
Under negotiation	$\geq$ 30% national co-financing for aid so far fully EU-funded (CoR); Spain opposes it for fruit, vegetables and wine; no MFF deal yet
Estonia	National plan €6.5 bn, incl. $\geq$ €1.59 bn for CAP; food-sector funding requested on top. No approved horticulture plan found



Levers that raise self-sufficiency (analyst view)

- Storage and grading
- Greenhouse energy efficiency
- Producer organisations
- Risk management and crisis reserve
- Investments

Food security reform and investment, 2028–2034

OBJECTIVE

Sufficient, safe and nutritious food for people in Estonia in normal times, in crises and in war.

OVERALL GOAL

Increase the **sustainability** of food sector companies, including their **competitiveness** and **export capacity**, through **knowledge**, **investment** and **innovative solutions**, **mitigating risks** and thereby improving the **security of food supply**.

CHALLENGES

- Estonia's food security depends on imports
- Low competitiveness of the food sector and weak resilience in crises
- Ensuring the sustainability of the food sector
- Knowledge, innovation, digitalisation and automation in the food sector
- Food safety across the whole food system

Source: preparation of Estonia's national plan 2028–2034 (food sector); .

Peat belongs where uniform, controlled quality matters most

1 · CONSISTENT QUALITY

Uniform plants

Alternatives still vary too much in quality to suit every use. Peat gives uniform, controlled growing conditions.



2 · PROTECTED CULTIVATION

Area grows

Greenhouses and tunnels cut weather risk. Estonia: covered area for vegetables and strawberries 30 $\nearrow$ 34 ha (2010–20).



3 · WHAT SOCIETY EXPECTS

Biological control

Protected cultivation makes biological pest control easier.



EPKK assessment for discussion. Covered area: agricultural census 2020 (Statistics Estonia via Ministry).

CONCLUSIONS

Three conclusions for peat industry companies

Peat volume holds; growth is in mixes

Secure wood fibre, bark and compost alongside peat, and prove the consistency of your mixes.

Target the segments that use growing media

Only about 3% of Estonian peat is used at home. Greenhouses, berries and nurseries drive demand.

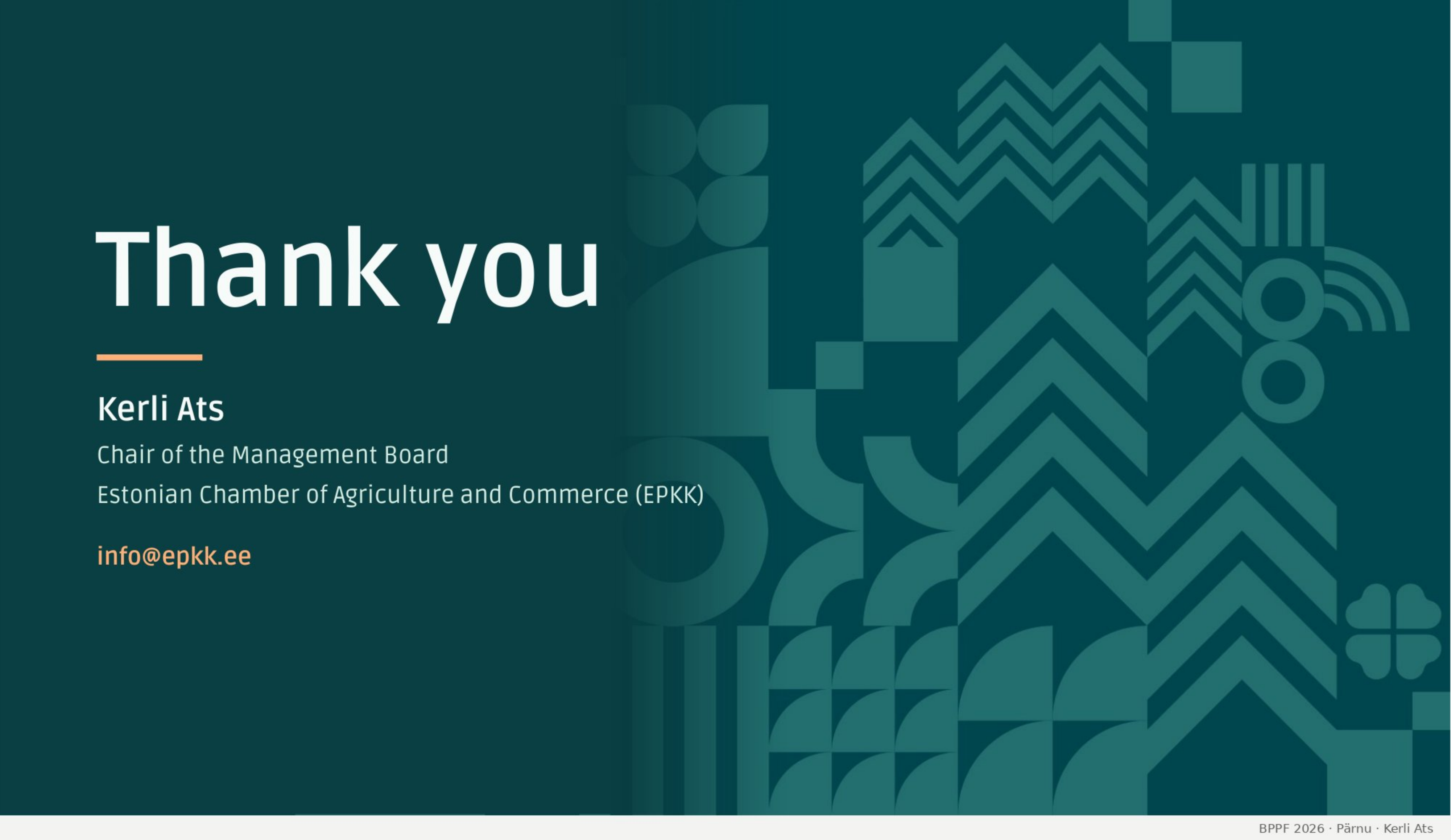
Assess customer risk, shape policy early

Flexible terms, technical support and joint CAP input deliver more than price competition.

SPEAK TO THE PUBLIC WITH ONE MESSAGE

Explain, together and more often, how peat supports food safety: a clean, consistent growing medium for crops and hygienic bedding for livestock.

Thank you



Kerli Ats

Chair of the Management Board

Estonian Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce (EPKK)

info@epkk.ee