

The EU apricot crop is set to be the lowest in 30 years following severe spring frosts, according to the French farm minister.

France's apricot harvest appears to have been hit the hardest, with supplies expected to fall to their lowest level in at least 46 years, down 60% from the five-year average.

Temperatures fell well below zero on several nights in a row last month in many parts of France. The unfavorable conditions caused major damage to orchards, vineyards and spring crops, leading to record frost-related losses.

"The historic spring frost affected all (apricot) producing regions, and more severely the Rhone corridor," the ministry said in its latest estimates.

It pegged this year's apricot harvest at 48,800 metric tons (MT), down 43% from last year.

The 2021 EU apricot harvest would fall by 20% compared to 2020 and by 40% compared to the 2015-2019 average. In Italy, Spain and Greece, production would fall by respectively 40%, a third and a quarter compared to the average level, it said, citing MedFEL.

Spring cereal, oilseed and sugar beet crops also suffered from the frosts although losses would not be as steep, separate farm ministry estimates showed.