

FLOWERS - The year-round spring climate of the highlands around Bogotá, Medellín, Cali and Manizales, at altitudes of 2,000 to 3,000 metres above sea level, has favoured this fast-growing industry during the last twenty years, where only some plastic roof and walls are required to protect the plants.

Colombia ranks second in the world in fresh flower exports after Holland. Colombian flowers, which are renowned for their colour, vitality and duration, benefit from favorable climate, low-cost intensive labor, and advanced air cargo facilities for rapid distribution. Carnations, pompons, mums, and roses represent 88 percent of exports, although some twenty different varieties are grown in 280 flower farms averaging 20 acres. This industry has created direct employment opportunities for close to 100,000 people, 65 percent of them are women, with the best wages in the agricultural sector.

■ Exports in 1988 reached 87,019 tons for a total value of CDN \$247 million, up 17.8 percent from 1987. The two largest markets are the U.S. (82 percent) and Europe (11.9 percent) but another 45 countries are also supplied. Canadian purchases amount to CDN \$6.9 million in 1987, increasing to CDN \$9.6 million in 1988.

PROEXPO, the Export Promotion Office, will build flower handling terminals in Bogotá and Miami with refrigeration facilities to improve the duration of cut flowers. In 1989, the covered greenhouse area was expected to increase by five percent to reach 2,500 hectares and exports were projected at CDN \$284 million.

POTATOES - 1988 production amounted to 2.2 million tons, planted on an area of 170,000 hectares. This represents a three percent increase over 1987 on account of better prices and weather, although inputs were costlier. The main producing Departments are Cundinamarca, Boyacá and Nariño. Yields vary widely from 10 to 25 tons per hectare according to technology used and inputs applied. Most production comes from five-hectare plots in small holdings. Only four percent of this production is processed. Prices move in a cyclical pattern due to planting times although harvesting is almost continuous somewhere in Colombia.

■ As a general rule, Colombia imports neither potatoes nor seed although processors claim that local existing varieties do not meet their requirements. Very sporadic minor imports take place from neighboring Venezuela and Ecuador. Exports are made on a minor scale to neighboring countries and to the Caribbean islands. For 1989, a similar production of 2.3 million tons was expected due to higher input costs.