

International Asparagus Days in Italy

The International Asparagus Days event will bring together the world of asparagus from 7th to 9th September 2021, in Rimini, Italy, with a programme featuring an exhibition, demonstrations, conferences and field visits.

BY GUY DUBON

The International Asparagus Days (IAD) will be held from 7th to 9th September 2021 in Rimini, Italy. The event, dedicated to the world of asparagus, will take place for the first time in parallel with Macfrut, the international exhibition of the fruit and vegetable sector.

IAD is a place of information, exchanges and presentations for asparagus professionals.



Christian Befve, international asparagus specialist and creator of IAD, Luciano Trentini, asparagus specialist in Italy and Renzo Piraccini, president of Macfrut will host the world of asparagus from September 7 to 9.

Renzo Piraccini, president of Macfrut, intends to “create synergies and important opportunities for exhibitors and visitors”. The 2021 edition of IAD will focus on four areas. On 7th and 9th September, an exhibition area will host international asparagus companies. A specially designed IAD route will also allow meetings with the companies present at Macfrut whose activity includes asparagus and guided tours are planned by the organisers. The conferences, held at the end of the day, will allow a closer look at the main issues related to the asparagus sector. On 8th September, there will be presentations in a demonstration area of machinery, equipment and materials for asparagus installations, harvesting and packaging. Visits to asparagus production and processing sites will be organised on Thursday, 9th September (please register for participation).

Four conferences at the IAD

Tuesday 7th September

17:00–17:30. New techniques for anticipating and responding to climate change
Christian Befve, global asparagus consultant Befve & Co

17:30–18:00. Overview of world varieties and creation of experimental fields
Julien Rocherieux, global specialist consultant in asparagus varieties

Wednesday 8th September

17:00–17:30. What techniques can best respond to the scarcity and increased costs of labour?
Didier Duprat, specialist consultant in asparagus

17:30–18:00. Relationship between production and asparagus marketers at the European level
Luciano Trentini, consultant agronomist

More information at: www.macfrut.com or info@asparagusdays.com



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International Asparagus Days to reveal trends

International Asparagus Days (IAD), taking place from 7th to 9th September 2021 in Rimini, Italy, will serve as a great opportunity for asparagus professionals from all over the world.

The event is organised by Macfrut with the help of Christian Befve (creator of IAD and international asparagus specialist) and Luciano Trentini (Italian asparagus specialist). A press conference at the end of June presented some global and Italian trends in this sector.

Christian Befve, international consultant

"Green asparagus, availability of labour, organic asparagus" are the global trends

"Worldwide, white asparagus production is stagnating. The ageing consumer profile, preparation constraints (peeling) and seasonality are all limiting factors," said Christian Befve. "On the other hand, green asparagus, which is more festive and aimed at a young audience all year round, is seeing global production develop." These trends are borne out by the fall in demand for canned white asparagus and the surging popularity of frozen green asparagus.

In Italy, underfloor heating is used for earlier asparagus.



The asparagus production around the world is boosted by the growth in consumption of green asparagus.

In consumer countries (mainly in Europe and North America), the main obstacles to the development of the asparagus sector are the labour shortages and rising labour costs. *"It is now the same in exporting countries, such as Peru or Mexico, where other crops (blueberries, avocados) or activities (industry) can more easily recruit workers,"* said Befve. *"As is the case with other fruits and vegetables, the organic asparagus segment is growing in Europe, the US and Japan. There is also rising demand for local production, meaning that it is still possible to add value despite the higher production costs compared to conventional cultivation."*

Luciano Trentini, asparagus specialist

"Increasing asparagus consumption in Italy"

In Italy, asparagus accounts for 9,500 ha of production, with green asparagus grown and consumed in the south and white asparagus in the north of the country. But, according to Luciano Trentini, the major challenge for the Italian asparagus sector is to increase consumption. Even though this crop represents €100 million in value, only 1 in 2 Italians consumes asparagus once a year. According to the specialist, the key is to have asparagus available for longer periods on the shelves by using earlier production techniques (underfloor heating) or later methods (autumn cultivation). This will improve the image of asparagus projected to consumers in the form of signs of quality, while also enhancing the crop's environmental credentials (little use of phytosanitary products, low water consumption). *"Its profitability for producers will also depend on adapting new crop techniques such as large bed gaps,"* said Trentini.



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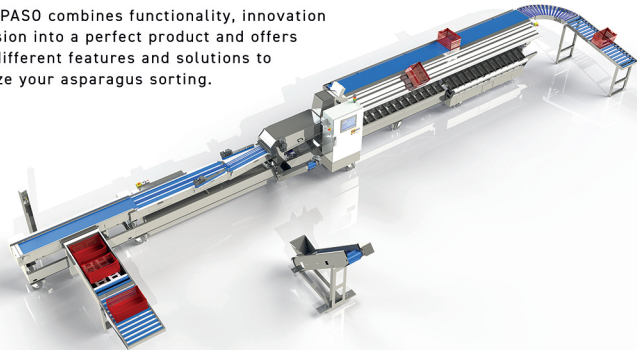
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Peruvians reclaim **global asparagus crown**

Peru has re-established itself as the world's leading exporter of fresh asparagus, particularly by increasing exports to the US.

BY RICHARD WILKINSON

Peru has re-established itself as the world's leading exporter of fresh asparagus, having wrested the title from Mexico. In 2020, Peruvians exported over 125,000 tons of asparagus worth US\$377.1 million. The pandemic played an instrumental part in total shipments of asparagus from Peru contracting by 5% in volume and 4% in value compared to the previous year, while Mexican shipments plummeted by 54% in volume and 17% in value. Global exports of asparagus were down 12% in volume and 7% in value (410,000 tons for \$1.25bn) compared to 2019 levels.

All eyes on US market

The main market for Peruvian asparagus shipments is the US, which accounts for 68% (\$255.6m) of the total, followed by the UK, the Netherlands, Spain and Canada. According to USDA/ERS data, US per capita consumption of asparagus grew from 0.8kg per

The country's climate allows two full crops of asparagus a year and a constant supply.



“ **Despite the COVID-19 crisis, asparagus exports continued to grow in 2020 and will continue growing in 2021. This consolidates Peru as the main supplier of asparagus in Florida and the second supplier in the United States.** ”

Max Rodriguez,
director of Peru Trade Office, Miami (PROMPERU).

It was by improving its sales to the United States that Peru regained world leadership.

person in 2018 and 2019 to 0.83kg per person in 2020. Hence, Peru sees this market as the key to its continued prosperity.

PortMiami: the gateway for Peruvian asparagus

PortMiami has become a key entrance point to the US market for Peruvian asparagus. In 2021, asparagus shipments from Peru to PortMiami have continued to grow following last year's record traffic. The volume of asparagus moving through the port increased from 1,200 tons in 2017 to 67,500 tons in 2020. Likely to further propel this growth is shipping line Seaboard's recent addition of an express service between Peru and PortMiami that takes just nine days from Callao, seven days from Paita and six days from Guayaquil. The significant increases in traffic indicate that importers view PortMiami as their preferred gateway to the US for Peruvian asparagus, with Miami-Dade County offering an abundance of cold storage warehouses and experienced fumigation providers.

Peru contributes the largest share of asparagus (mostly green) entering PortMiami. This is due in no small part to the country's climate, which allows two full crops of asparagus a year and a constant supply, even when other countries' products are absent. While Mexico remains the main supplier of asparagus to the US, this might be another title wrested away from it by its dynamic rival Peru.

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Germany's 2021 asparagus season: a delayed start and oversupply

Slow to take off due to unfavourable weather conditions, Germany's season found supply exceeding demand, with restaurants closed for most of the season.

The 2021 asparagus season was the second to take place under pandemic conditions. "Growers were able to benefit from the pre-

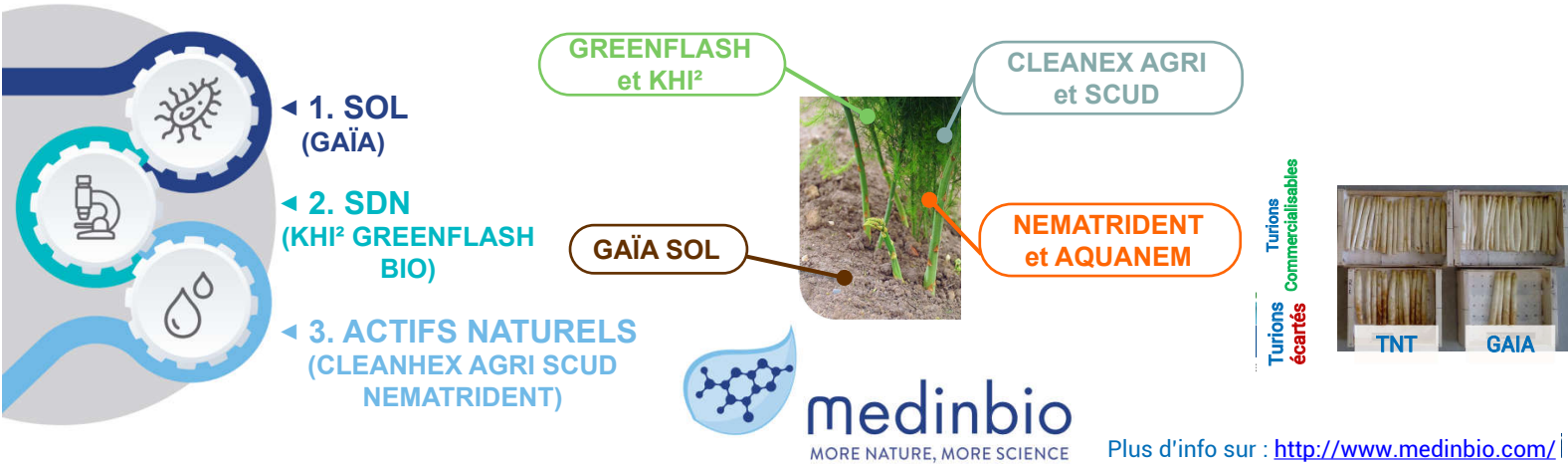
In Germany, the late recovery in catering has not kept the market in balance.



vious year's experience in terms of procurement, accommodation, and labour deployment," said Michael Koch, AMI. The higher costs remained, while restaurants initially stayed shut. The reopening of the food service sector in June did not bring the hoped-for surge in demand. Harvest under plastic covering started up to 14 days later than in the previous year, depending on the region, and volumes were low. The weather was too cold and there was a lack of irradiation to heat the soils under the plastic covers. As a result, the marketing period for asparagus from heated cultivation extended for longer than in the previous two years. Due to the cold nights and the lack of irradiation, the supply in April remained limited. In mid-April, food retailers started marketing asparagus more intensively and prices paid by food retailers were often above the previous year's level. The excessively low temperatures in April and May meant that supply was mostly too small, rather than too large. "The price collapse which often takes place at the beginning of May failed to occur," said Koch. It was not until the end of May that the market turned around. Due to an overlap of early and late varieties, supply increased faster than demand. From that point until the end of the season, supply remained consistently too high, and prices no longer reached the level of the previous year. Demand from private households remained below the high level of the previous year throughout the season. In April, the purchase volume was 18% lower than in the previous year, and in May, it was around 12% lower.

Sources: Michael Koch, AMI

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How to combat **Crioceris asparagi**

The asparagus beetle (*Crioceris asparagi*) has become the most problematic pest attacking aerial parts of asparagus, especially in the south of France, but also in Spain and Germany.

BY ADRIEN LASNIER

French asparagus producers have found themselves helpless in the fight against the asparagus beetle since the ban on neonicotinoids was imposed at the end of 2018. In the Landes area of France, the Invenio station has launched two projects aimed at finding alternative control measures to replace neonicotinoids. The projects, called *Crioceris* and OPABA (optimisation of asparagus protection against aerial pests), are being carried out in collaboration with the Station Légumes Centre Action (LCA). Of the alternatives

to biocontrol products that have so far been evaluated under test conditions, most showed no efficacy, or very partial efficacy, and only on the larval stage of *Crioceris asparagi*.

Push-pull versus asparagus beetle?

Two other trials conducted by Invenio in the Landes as part of the OPABA project are aimed at evaluating the repellent potential of certain plants vis-à-vis the asparagus beetle. The idea is to identify the plant or plants that could intervene in a push-pull type arrangement in asparagus cultivation. Unfortunately, in test conditions, it appears that none of the plants tested (basil, green mint, parsley, coriander, petunia, capuchin and tansy) have a repellent effect. *“But laboratory controlled trials may yet need to be considered,”* said Sarah Bellalou, former manager of the asparagus pole at Invenio⁽¹⁾.

(1) Replaced by Romain Warneys as head of Invenio's Asparagus division.



The asparagus beetle, both in larval and adult states, is very damaging to asparagus, through the damage it causes to the leaves.

