

**Title** Mechanical harvesting of apricots ('Búlida') in Spain  
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### **Abstract**

Hand harvesting of apricots is the most time-consuming task in apricot cultivation under Spanish conditions, accounting for more than 60% of the total labour time. As a way to reduce the cost of this operation, four mechanical harvesting systems have been tested: a hand-carried canvas structure, to catch the fruits, and a hand-held petrol vibrator; a tractor lift-mounted trunk shaker with an inverted umbrella; a tractor-trailed trunk shaker with an inverted umbrella; and a continuous-travel, shake-and-catch harvesting machine. All the systems improved the harvesting operation, from 56 kg/h-worker of hand harvesting to 360 kg/h-worker of the hand-held shaker, to 6000 kg/h-worker of the continuous harvester. With respect to damage, the canvas and manual shaker systems produce less damage than manual harvesting; all the other mechanical systems damage the fruits more than manual harvesting, but the quality of the fruits is good enough for processing.