

**Title** Extending the asparagus production harvest period in southern Spain  
**Authors** P. Cermeño, S. Calado, V. Rubio, F.R. Ortega  
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### **Abstract**

Spain has a large area of asparagus production (about 13,000 ha); the harvest period is running from late February, in Southern Spain, through late May in the rest of the country. Today's consumers demand the product during the whole year. The market is therefore supplied with asparagus originating from other countries with different climatic conditions, which increases products costs. When Spanish growers would be able to produce in a different season, it would result in a longer period of asparagus supply to meet existing demand, higher consumption and a higher average market price for asparagus. Our objective is to extend the harvest period by using plastic tunnels (protecting the crop with polyethylene film) at different times during winter – soil temperature would increase faster resulting in an earlier harvest– and to prolong the harvest period by using the Mother Stalk method in the conditions of Southern Spain. Crop performance was recorded with one, three and five mother stems per plant for the cultivars 'Grande', 'Plaverd', 'Steline', 'UC 157' and 'Atlas'. By using plastic tunnels production started earlier, although the harvest period ended before that of the non-covered asparagus. The vegetative phase increased by six, four and four weeks, respectively, for the three covering dates: 16<sup>th</sup> December, 14<sup>th</sup> January and 8<sup>th</sup> February. In turn, use of the Mother Stalk method generally increased the yield and quality levels, and the harvest period was extended from June until October.