

Abstract:

The chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) growing represents a typical secondary cultivation that allows to maintain agriculture alive also in marginal areas otherwise neglected. This research aims at demonstrating that also this cultivation allows setting mechanised yards for the harvest of the fruits, which can bring down harvesting times and costs without compromising the quality of the product. The research, financed by ARSIAL with the EEC funds (reg. 2081/93 ob. 5b), took five years of work and ended during the last season. It has allowed the setting up of two new self-moving machines, a vacuum and a mechanical harvester, able to collect almost 600-800 kg/h of chestnuts, without relevant consequences on the marketability of the collected fruits. The present article also reports the results of the laboratory tests for the evaluation of the short-term damages (splits, bruises, abrasions) and of the variations on the degree of conservation of the fruits after the traditional "curatura" treatment.