

Press Release

Cerescon awarded €1.5 million European grant

Heeze, 3 May 2018 – [Cerescon](#), the developer of the first selective asparagus harvesting machine, [Sparter](#), signed the European grant agreement with Brussels last week. This SME Instrument project is part of Horizon 2020; a European grant to support the development of innovative solutions and the exploration of new markets. Cerescon is using this grant for the market introduction of Sparter. The project will start in July 2018, for a period of two years.

Market launch of Sparter

The first Sparter has been operational since this asparagus season at an asparagus grower in France. A second 1-row Sparter is currently being used for a 3-year application study in collaboration with LimGroup and Wageningen University. Cerescon is also building a 3-row Sparter, which will give demonstrations in the second half of the asparagus season to various interested growers from the Netherlands and abroad. Thérèse van Vinken, General Manager and co-owner of Cerescon: "There is huge interest in the Sparter; this season even growers from Peru and Dubai are coming to see the machine in operation". Cerescon is using the grant obtained to test and demonstrate the Sparter in different countries with different soil types and asparagus varieties. The high-tech start-up will also be presenting the Sparter at various trade fairs and conferences. The final objective of the Horizon 2020 project is a proven selective asparagus harvesting machine in an operational environment.

SME Instrument

No fewer than 1,163 European SMEs submitted a project application this round. After a tough selection procedure, the best companies were invited for a second assessment in the form of an interview with a jury of innovation and business experts. Ad Vermeer and Thérèse van Vinken pitched their project to a jury of seven experts. Cerescon is one of the 57 SMEs that have been awarded a grant. "The award of this grant indicates that Cerescon is one of the most innovative and promising SMEs in Europe", says Ad Vermeer, the inventor of Sparter and co-owner of Cerescon.

Horizon 2020 is a European funding programme running from 2014 to 2020. With a total budget of almost €80 billion, the European Commission stimulates research and innovation. Only high-quality innovative projects with both a technical and social impact are eligible. Competition is fierce, the cumulative success rate for SME phase 2 is only 5.5%.

Operation of asparagus harvest robot

Sparter has a unique concept: a patented underground detection method with integrated modules for asparagus cutting, plastic handling and sandbed repair. The cutting robot cuts the asparagus from the top of the bed and removes it in a single movement, shakes the sand from the cutting blade and places the asparagus on the conveyor belt. For the grower, the costs of cutting are halved compared to hand cutting. The method of detection and cutting reduces damage to the

asparagus, resulting in higher yields. Furthermore, the asparagus does not discolour or flower. Machine harvesting not only produces more asparagus, but also better-quality asparagus.

"This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 811469".

About Cerescon

Cerescon is a young and rapidly-growing high-tech startup. Among other things Cerescon focuses on the development, production and marketing of Sparter, a selective asparagus harvesting machine. Selective harvesting is highly labour-intensive, and engaging manual labour for harvesting is becoming increasingly difficult. Horticultural firms affected by this could maintain their markets for the Netherlands and Europe through the use of robotics. More information can be found at www.cerescon.com.

For more information

Cerescon

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Caption:

Photo 1: [Cerescon Sparter - 1-row version in operation](#)

Photo 2: [Thérèse van Vinken - signing Grant Agreement](#)

Photo 3: [Cerescon Sparter - cutting module, detail view](#)

Photo 4: [Logo SME Instrument](#)



Co-funded by the Horizon 2020 programme of the European Union