

Press release

3 million euros for Cerescon's asparagus harvesting robot

Heeze, 19 May 2020 – [Cerescon](#), the developer of the very first selective asparagus harvesting robot, [Sparter](#), has recently secured an additional 3 million euros in funding. Cerescon will be using this extra capital to boost sale and production of Sparter, after the 1-row self-propelling harvesting robot was put through its paces during the current asparagus harvesting season.

The new private investor in Cerescon, a successful Brabant-based businessman said: “Sparter’s unique technology, in combination with Cerescon’s way of working and their dependable team have made a convincing impression on me. Cerescon, as well as the asparagus market, offer enormous potential, so for me, it’s a great investment opportunity.”

Asparagus market

The agricultural industry has seen a whole string of new developments in robotic technology recently. This is no less true in the asparagus sector. Finding sufficient workers to harvest the asparagus is still the biggest challenge facing asparagus growers. The problem has now been intensified by the coronavirus crisis, increasing the necessity for automation in asparagus harvesting. Many growers are currently being confronted with a 30% shortfall in manual harvesters. “Since the outbreak of the coronavirus, interest in Sparter from growers has doubled now that harvesters are even thinner on the ground,” explains Mark van Lier, international sales manager at Cerescon.

Production plans

Cerescon must now rise to the challenge of producing Sparter in larger numbers commercially. Over a period of 5 years, Cerescon aims to expand production to 150 machines annually. They aim to achieve this by working with a number of partners – key players in the Brainport manufacturing industry. On the back of positive experiences with partners in previous years and the know-how of its own personnel, there is every confidence that the production plans are viable. Cerescon carries out the research and development itself, but seeks out partners for production. And for the service and marketing of Sparter too, Cerescon works with tried and trusted players in the market. To this end, Cerescon has already had various contacts and drawn up contracts. Thérèse van Vinken, general manager of Cerescon: “Planning for the production of machines at the kind of scale Cerescon anticipates, not only requires the right partners in the market, but also a solid financial basis. With the current financing package, this is ring-fenced. We are particularly pleased with the guarantee of continuity it gives us.”

Sparter

Sparter's uniqueness lies in its subsurface detection sensor which not only helps reduce harvesting costs by 50%, but also leads to better quality asparagus being harvested. The technology of the detection - with integrated double harvesting robot, sand bed repair, asparagus transport and plastic handling - is also optimised. The self-propelled harvesting robot on caterpillar tracks is being demonstrated amongst a number of growers in the Netherlands and Germany this season. The 1-row Sparter can replace a team of around 25 harvesters. The concept of self-propulsion means no tractor and driver are needed. Because of its compact dimensions harvesting can also be carried out in smaller fields with standard headlands and the machine can be easily transported by road on the back of a trailer. Sparter can be driven by one operator.

About Cerescon

Cerescon is a young and rapidly developing high-tech scale-up that is focused on the development, production and marketing of an automatic selective asparagus harvester. Harvesting asparagus is a very labor-intensive branch of horticulture: to this day, the 'white gold' is manually harvested by thousands of manual laborers. Cerescon is the first company in the world to successfully demonstrate an automatic asparagus harvester.

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Prototype of Sparter, the 1-row asparagus harvesting robot from Cerescon, in demonstration



Prototype of Sparter, the 1-row asparagus harvesting robot from Cerescon



Detail photo 1: asparagus cutting knife from Sparter, the harvesting robot from Cerescon



Detail photo 2: asparagus cutting knife from Sparter, the harvesting robot from Cerescon



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