



Agriculture & Horticulture
DEVELOPMENT BOARD



New Project

FV 387a

Improving Quality and Extending the
Season for Late UK Leeks

Project Number: FV 387a

Project Title: Improving Quality and Extending the Season for Late UK Leeks

Project Leader: David Norman

Contractor: Precision Agronomy Ltd

Industry Representative: Patrick Allpress, Allpress Farms

Start Date: 1st December 2011

End Date: 30th November 2013

Project Cost: £49,250

SUBJECT TO CONTRACT

Project Summary:

Currently the UK supplies home grown leeks from around the 1st July until the end of April, cold storage can increase the length of supply by a few weeks into May.

The main factor which stops field harvesting in late April/early May is the development of the seed head within the plant – bolting. If bolting could be reduced or controlled, when combined with cold storage, UK leeks could be marketed for an extra 4 weeks, reducing dependence imports, increasing UK late season production.

The earlier project - FV387 examined the use of three different growth regulators on leeks applied during the Autumn or in the Spring. This project concluded that only maleic hydrazide ('Fazor') was useful in reducing bolting and that Spring applications were the most promising for reducing bolting without adverse crop effects when compared with Autumn applications. This project extension is designed to define more precisely those Spring application timings and rates to enable growers to use this active to the best effect. The work will also examine how varieties with differing bolt susceptibility perform when treated, during cold storage.

Note: Separate discussions are progressing with HDC and the chemical industry to ensure that the correct data is available to allow progression of an approval for use of 'Fazor'on leeks. It was agreed at the FV Panel (September 2011) that if the data (residues – metabolism) cannot be obtained or generated then the project will be terminated after 1 year.

Aims & Objectives:

(i) Project aim(s):

To further investigate the potential for extending the production season for UK leeks by improving late season quality and reliability of production.

(ii) Project objective(s):

Reduce or slow down the development of internal shoot growth (seed head development) in leeks at the end of the season by the use of maleic hydrazide. Test the interaction of selected varieties using cold storage to integrate the use of sprout suppression and cold storage to further extend the UK season.

Benefits to industry

Currently the UK supplies home grown leeks from around the 1st July until the end of April, cold storage can increase the length of supply by a few weeks into May.

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The total value of UK leek production is around £35,000,000 (source Defra hort. Stats 2009). Extending home production by 4 weeks could add £2-2.5 million gross output for UK leek growers and expand production from 1,800ha to 2,000ha.

In addition to season extension the quality of late produced leeks could be improved, as the use of growth regulators improves shelf life and keeping quality. This characteristic is already in commercial use on onions, carrots, and parsnips.

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