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First Announcement - Call for papers

29 October - 1 November 2007

Held concurrently with

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31 October 2007

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Exploitation of Long Sweet Leek by Implementing a Local Agri-Food Chain

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Keywords: *Allium porrum*, local product, organic farming, blanching, sensory analysis

Recently, there has been an increasing interest for preserving old varieties that once were commonly widespread and cultivated, but that today are circumscribed to limited areas. Regional research programmes are directed to implement local food chains for promoting competitiveness and success of local growers. The 'Porro Lungo Dolce di Carmagnola' (long sweet leek: LSL) is a typical local leek selection (Carmagnola, Torino, Italy, 44°50' N; 7°42' E) characterized by a considerable tenderness and a sweet taste. A research was conducted to study the effect of pest management techniques and irrigation systems on yield, commercial, sensory quality at harvest and after three-month postharvest blanching phase. Biological and chemical pest management were compared to control the two most important foliage pests: the onion thrips (*Thrips tabaci* Lindeman) and the leek moth (*Acrolepiopsis assectella* Zeller). Drip irrigation was compared to furrow irrigation, which is traditionally used by growers, as alternative to rationalize water efficiency. Sensory analysis was performed with a trained panel using a descriptive test and an hedonistic evaluation and comparing LSL to commercially grown hybrids. Development of action threshold for pests, linked to a sampling procedure, could reduce the usage of pesticides. Using a sampling-based management, there were no differences between biological and chemical control on damage caused by foliage pests and on yield quality. At harvest, the edible portion of drip irrigated leeks were 270 g of mass, 38 cm long and 4 cm in diameter, 21%, 10% and 8% more than furrow irrigated leeks, respectively. After blanching phase, length increased and diameter decreased remarking the morphological characteristics that distinguish LSL from other local leek varieties and commercial hybrids. Sensory analysis results confirmed the sweet taste for LSL and highlighted interesting differences for taste and structure according to farms and production techniques.