

## PORTUGAL

### Entry of skilled / young farmers

#### Location

Ribatejo

#### Programming period

2014 – 2020

#### Priority

P2 – Competitiveness

#### Measure

M6 – Farm & business  
development

#### Funding (EUR)

Total budget 486 152.47

EAFRD 205 147.06

National/Regional 36 202.43

Private 244 802.98

#### Project duration

2015 – 2021

#### Project promoter

VILLABOSQUE – Produtos  
Agrícolas, Lda

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#### Website

[www.villabosque.pt](http://www.villabosque.pt)

An agricultural company used EAFRD funding to strengthen its production of green asparagus and increase its share of the national and European market.

### Summary

Compared with other vegetables on the European market, asparagus is a product with a high market value and is much in demand, particularly in Spain, France and Germany. This offers exciting possibilities to Portuguese farmers, who enjoy a competitive advantage since the Portuguese climate allows for early production.



The Villabosque agricultural company used EAFRD funding to support the production and commercialisation of irrigated green asparagus, using advanced techniques for production, processing, conservation and packaging. This investment helped the company to become one of the main producers of high-quality green asparagus in Portugal.

### Results

The company has launched its own brand 'Villabosque - Espargos Verdes do Ribatejo' on the national market, while a large part of their production is exported to the Spanish market.

The product obtained the GLOBALG.A.P. certification and meets all environmental criteria regarding the use of phytopharmaceutical products, fertilizers, water resources and energy.

The farm reduced its water consumption by around 25 % and its energy consumption by 45 %.

The farmers plant fava beans and peas between the lines of asparagus, which help to fix the nitrogen in the soil and are later used as a natural fertilizer: reducing the use of chemical fertilizers by 30%.

### Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ The major challenges that the beneficiaries face are ones that are common to almost all farmers: finding adequate labour, changing climate conditions and the management of pests.
- ❑ The project is particularly interesting in that it provides a solution to an otherwise technically challenging and complex production cycle: delivering successful results on the market.

## Context

Demand for asparagus has been on the rise in several European countries for some years. This has made investment into the technical development of its production economically very interesting. Thanks to its specific soil and climate conditions, Portugal is able to place the product on the market earlier than other countries, thus meeting increasing demand (especially for green asparagus).

This project was implemented in Ribatejo, a Portuguese region where wild asparagus is a traditional crop. The project team sought the advice of one of the world's leading specialists in the production of green asparagus, and chose to use the modern and innovative techniques of integrated production.

## Objectives

With this project the Villabosque agricultural company aimed to become one of the main producers of high-quality green asparagus in Portugal. They aimed to conquer a large part of the green asparagus market at national level, position their brand as a national reference point and export part of their production to Spain and France.

## Activities

EAFRD funding supported the production and commercialisation of irrigated green asparagus, using advanced techniques for their production, processing, conservation and packaging.

The asparagus were planted in clayey soil with a high content of limestone, which gives them a unique and characteristic flavour and makes for a high-quality product. The irrigation system guarantees water efficiency thanks to the use of soil moisture probes and a rain gauge. This, together with semi-automated harvesting, that uses a foot-controlled motorized cart, and the use of specific storage and cooling methods, guarantees the optimal use of resources, productivity and the plantation cycle - resulting in higher profitability.

The project also uses other innovative techniques including a machine for collecting and spreading plastic cover.

A calibrator and washing equipment to wash and cut the asparagus to the desired size, will be installed during future phases of the project, and will use innovative features to avoid waste: requiring only one employee to operate them, thus making the crop more profitable.

Finally, the process of packaging the final product is also semi-automated.

The beneficiaries attended specific training workshops about the production and marketing of green asparagus, which focussed on increasing production and expanding into new markets.

The farm has collaborated with plant-protection product companies to run field trials of new products, and has participated in a project developed by CEBAL – the Centre for Agricultural and Agri-Food Biotechnology of Alentejo – that is looking for new ways to use the by-products of asparagus production.

## Main results

Three years and two harvests after the project began, the company was able to launch its own brand 'Villabosque - Espargos Verdes do Ribatejo' on the national market, both through small distributors and through a national chain of stores. Besides this, a large part of the production is exported to the Spanish market, which recognises the quality and unique characteristics of the green asparagus from Ribatejo.

The project coordinators are proud to produce a quality product of regional origin, which has become a reference on the national market. Other farms are now following their example and the export of Portuguese asparagus has increased.

The product obtained GLOBALG.A.P. certification (an internationally recognised set of farm standards dedicated to good agricultural practices) and meets all environmental criteria regarding the use of phytopharmaceutical products, fertilizers, water resources and energy. The farm also obtained GRASP certification (the GLOBALG.A.P. Risk Assessment on Social Practice - a voluntary assessment of social practices on farms, addressing specific aspects of workers' health, safety and welfare).

The combination of water-storing wash basins and night-time irrigation – which limits evaporation – has allowed the farm to reduce its water consumption by around 25 % and its energy consumption by 45 %.

Between the lines of asparagus, the farmers plant fava beans and peas, which help to fix the nitrogen in the soil and which are later used as a natural fertilizer: reducing the use of chemical fertilizers by 30%. Any produce that exceeds the level of demand for fresh consumption is used to produce soups, and all production waste is used for composting.

## Additional sources of information

[www.facebook.com/villabosque.pt](http://www.facebook.com/villabosque.pt)

[www.vidarural.pt/insights/espargos-verdes-com-grande-potencial-de-crescimento/](http://www.vidarural.pt/insights/espargos-verdes-com-grande-potencial-de-crescimento/)

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