



Seed quality remains a challenge

Every year, the ultimate Limseeds end product, asparagus seeds, finds its way all over the world. Quite rightly, our customers expect to receive top-class products of high quality with respect to packaging, coating, varietal purity and germinating power. The foundation of this high quality is based on the conditions in which seed production takes place. The seed of all the varieties is produced in modern, aphid-free greenhouses - the only possible way to prevent unwanted pollination and, consequently, varietal impurities. The next safeguard is a strongly formalised quality control system ensuring Limseeds does not disappoint the high expectations of its customers. In Limseeds' own laboratory, the seed is extensively tested for aspects including germinating power, Fusarium, moisture content and varietal purity. Advanced, molecular DNA techniques are used to define seed quality. An extensive tracking and tracing system combined with very detailed coding on the packaging enables us to precisely determine the seed's routing. Limseeds can trace the origin of seed production right back to a particular section at greenhouse level. Before seeds are dispatched to the customers, arbitration samples are taken by Naktuinbouw (Netherlands Inspection

Service for Horticulture), an independent organisation regulated by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality (LNV). This procedure ensures that in the event of arbitration there is always an independently stored sample. In order to monitor the seed's emergence and growing season we also sow samples of all the seed batches supplied. In the last years, Limseeds has invested heavily in seed quality improvement and seed quality management, all aimed at supplying our customers with guaranteed superior quality asparagus seeds year after year. After all, a good start is indispensable for a successful harvest.

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Avalim is tops in the early segment

Vitalim, a new asparagus variety for South Europe

Bean seed fly (*Delia platura*)

Limseeds®
the asparagus breeding company

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Avalim is tops in the early segment

For the earliest harvests in North West Europe, asparagus growers can choose between the two varieties Gijnlim and Avalim. These two varieties share a number of similarities but clearly differ in others. The main similarity is their earliness. They are equally early starters, giving production in identical conditions approx. 6 days earlier than Grolim and approx. 12 days earlier than Backlim. Both Gijnlim and Avalim are relatively unsusceptible to physiological rust and loose heads. The latter makes them especially suitable for growing green asparagus.

The main distinctive quality of Avalim compared to Gijnlim is its spear thickness. Avalim's average spear weight is approx. 15% higher than Gijnlim's. This makes the percentage of spears less than 16 mm considerably smaller, which in comparison will quickly add up to hundreds of kilos per hectare. These differences can be particularly large on light sandy soils. Avalim is highly resistant to hollowness and pink discoloration. Earliness, spear thickness and excellent quality offer the grower an ideal launching pad for high yields.

Vitalim, a new asparagus variety for South Europe

With justifiable pride, Limseeds announces an addition to its variety range: the new variety "Vitalim". Vitalim is the first variety resulting from Limseeds' greatly intensified programme which focuses on South Europe. Vitalim is pre-eminently suitable for the production of white asparagus in the Mediterranean climate. The variety is, of course, a fully male hybrid combining very early production with exceptionally high yields. The new variety's name is a clear link with the important characteristics of vitality and vigour.

Vitalim combines forced early cultivation and production potential with properties including resistance to physiological rust, breaking and loose heads. The main



grade of the spears is class 16 – 24 mm. Vitalim's foliage is very erect, not susceptible to lodging and highly resistant to leaf moulds. With Vitalim and Grolim, Southern European growers can benefit from two extremely productive varieties with reliably long economic life spans, from early to late in the season.

Seed and, with it, planting material will quickly become available in the coming years. Vitalim appears unsuitable for the colder Northern European climate but extensive testing in the next few years will clarify this.

Bean seed fly (*Delia platura*)

The bean seed fly's first generation of larvae can cause considerable damage in asparagus. The conspicuous holes, often in the lower half of the white asparagus spears and sometimes accompanied by deformed spears, often make the product unsaleable.

The bean seed fly is a fly which is slightly smaller than the housefly, but is extremely difficult to recognise in the field. The flies mainly feed on nectar from blossom from many different trees and plants. The flies show most activity at temperatures above 15° C and with little wind. The first flies deposit 70–90 eggs during a 3–4 week period, preferably into humid soils in a protected spot, for instance, amongst the remains of organic matter or small weeds. Host plants include spinach, potatoes, peas, onions and gherkins. In normal conditions, the young larvae hatch after 2–4 days. The harmful larvae are yellow-white, legless and tapering on one side. Heads are hardly visible to the naked eye. The damaging larval stage lasts for about

12–16 days. After that, the larvae pupate close to the surface, which takes 10–20 days before the new generation of flies appears. Damage to asparagus often peaks for 5–7 days and then slows down again. When the first serious damage is observed, the first larvae are already pupating. It is very easy for the bean seed fly to deposit its eggs on beds on uncovered plots or plots where thermal plastic is not placed until late. It also appears that the fly already deposits eggs if beds have been left uncovered for only a few hours, because damage occurs even on early covered plots. Chemical pest control is not allowed. Good weed control and covering the ridges of the beds are some of the possible precautions.

Company information

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Information about varieties developed by us (Avalim, Backlim, Gijnlim, Grolim, Herkolim, Horlim and Thielim) can be obtained from our variety specialists. They can be reached using the telephone and fax number or email address stated above.

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Design: Pit Reclame
Print: Clabbers drukkerij
Photos: Marieta Vlemmix Fotografie and Limseeds