

THE FIRST FOUR CLONES SELECTED FROM THE TRADITIONAL ARTICHOKE ROMANESCO POPULATIONS

REY MUÑOZ N.A*, NOORANI A.*, PAGNOTTA M.A.*, CRINÒ P.**, TAVAZZA R.**,
TEMPERINI O.***, SACCARDO F.***

*) Università della Tuscia, Dipartimento Agrobiologia e Agrochimica, Via S. C. de Lellis,
01100 Viterbo (Italy)

**) ENEA C.R. Casaccia, Dipartimento Biotecnologie, Agroindustria e Protezione della Salute,
Via Anguillarese 301, 00123 Rome (Italy)

***) Università della Tuscia, Dip. GEMINI, Via S. C. de Lellis, 01100 Viterbo (Italy)

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The 'Romanesco' variety, with its spherical or sub-spherical, non-spiny green-violet heads, accounts for about 9% of Italy's production (ISTAT 2005). It includes two important populations: Castellamare and Campagnano. The former is an early-maturing type while the latter is a late-maturing type. Recently, the C3 clone, which matures earlier than the Castellamare, has replaced much of the 'Romanesco' landrace material. This has led to a significant erosion of local genetic resources and a loss of diversity. In order to conserve and safeguard artichoke germplasm of Castellammare and Campagnano types, ENEA and Tuscia University collected germplasm from farmers' fields which is currently conserved both *in vitro* and in field gene banks. The germplasm is being evaluated for morphological, molecular and quality traits. The conservation and evaluation activities are now continuing within the framework of the CYNARES project, receiving financial support from the European Commission, DG for Agriculture and Rural Development, under Council Regulation (EC) No 870/2004. The project brings together skilled partners from leading European countries in the field of *Cynara* research for several propositions, including germplasm rationalization and the increase of new accessions.

To assure germplasm variability and to protect some landrace typologies, 4 'Romanesco' clones will be presented for release at the National Variety Register in collaboration with ARSIAL (Agenzia Regionale per lo Sviluppo e l'Innovazione dell'Agricoltura nel Lazio).

The clones, which will be fully described in the poster, are characterized by differences: maturity dates, ranging from beginning to end of March; size of head (diameter from 8 to 10 cm); production weight (from 1.7 to 2.3 kg); receptacle thickness (from 0.5 to 0.9 cm); and molecular patterns. The 4 clones belong to Campagnano, Grato 1, C3, and Castellamare typologies: Campagnano is characterized by late maturity (end of March), tall and large plants, absence of spines, medium-sized heads and a short period of production (within about 23 days); C3 and Castellamare are characterized by early maturity (beginning of March), short plants, good production in terms of total weight but differently distributed between primary and secondary heads, thick receptacles, uniformity in the shape of the tip, the head and the presence of mucron; Grato 1 is characterized by big and heavy heads, mid maturity (mid March) and medium-large plant size, dark colour, good production in terms of total weight within 28 days of production.