

Oomycotes

Pythium

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, . 8, 1164 ,

Oomycotes from genus *Pythium* found in water and soil samples in Bulgaria

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SUMMARY

Pythium spp.

Oomycotes

Pythium

Pythium spp. are water moulds, present in most cultivated soils, but also in natural environment. Many of them are recorded as plant pathogens of economic importance in agriculture with large range of hosts and are more devastating by causing the root rot on plants. As Oomycotes they produce sporangia which release numerous swimming zoospores. The caused diseases are more severe during an extended period of high soil moisture, or in water systems, as motile zoospores move and spread through the water to infect healthy plants. Thus these plant pathogens can spread in irrigation water as well as by contaminated soil.

We have investigated the presence of *Pythium* species in soil samples associated with different plant hosts, derived from natural habitats or cultivated areas, and in water samples from rivers passing through diverse environments and regions in Bulgaria. Oomycotes organisms of genus *Pythium* were found to be largely spread across the country.

Pythium

22
Pythium spp.
 , 10
 , 3
 20
Pythium spp.
 ITS
Pythium spp.

: *Pythium*,

Pythium

(Van der Plaats-Niterink, 1981; Mathew et al., 2003).
 (Martin and Loper, 1999),

(Chen et al., 2005; Sati, 1991; De Cock et al., 1987; Vanittanakom et al., 2014).

Pythium

(Paulitz and Baker, 1987; Horner et al., 2012)

(Yacoub et al., 2016).

Pythium

(Uzhashi et al., 2010).

(Zhang and Yang, 2000; Zitnick-Anderson and Nelson Jr., 2015), (Zhang and Yang, 2000),

Totally 22 *Pythium* spp. were isolated from soil samples. Among them 7 isolates were obtained from garden trade centers and forest nurseries, 10 from forests areas, 3 from orchards, one from a city park and one from a private yard. Another 20 isolates from rivers were also collected and determined as *Pythium* spp. according to the DNA sequencing of the internal transcribed spacer (ITS) region.

Data shows the high inoculum potential of *Pythium* spp. present in soil and rivers throughout entire territory of Bulgaria, possible to trigger destructive plant diseases in nurseries and watering crops areas under favorable conditions.

Key words: *Pythium*, soil, rivers, distribution

INTRODUCTION

The members of oomycete genus *Pythium* are water moulds known as widely spread throughout the world, which are present in most cultivated soils and natural environments (Van der Plaats-Niterink, 1981; Mathew et al., 2003). Some of them are known as saprophytes (Martin and Loper, 1999), but others can infect animals or even humans (Chen et al, 2005; Sati, 1991; de Cock et al, 1987; Vanittanakom et al., 2014). Among *Pythium* representatives there are identified even mycoparasites on other oomycetes (Paulitz and Baker, 1987; Horner et al., 2012) or inducers of plant defense systems although they are not parasites themselves (Yacoub et al., 2016). One of the largest groups of *Pythium* species is composed of plant pathogens, including many causal agents of devastating plant diseases on a broad plant host range generally causing rot of fruit, roots and stems, and pre- or post emergence damping-off of seeds and seedlings (Uzhashi et al., 2010).

These pathogens are recorded to infect soybean (Zhang and Yang, 2000; Zitnick-Anderson and Nelson Jr., 2015), corn (Zhang and Yang, 2000), potato, sugar

(Suffert and Guilbert, 2007; Schroeder et al., 2013), (Cherif et al., 1994), (Pern el et al., 2006), (Khan and Haque, 2013; Bian et al., 2016), (Le et al., 2014), (*Barbula unguiculata*) (Ueta and Tajo, 2016)

(Weiland et al., 2015)
al., 2006).

Oomycotes,
Pythium

(Sutton et

(Schroeder

et al., 2013).

2008)
Moorman, 2005)

(Nechwatal et al.,
(Hong and

Pythium

bean, carrot (Suffert and Guilbert, 2007; Schroeder et al., 2013), cucumbers (Cherif et al., 1994), cocoyam, pineapple (Perne l et al., 2006), tobacco (Khan and Haque, 2013; Bian et al., 2016), ginger (Le et al., 2014), moss (Ueta and Tajo, 2016) etc. They were also the reasons for root rot in forest nurseries (Weiland et al., 2015) and hydroponic crops (Sutton et al., 2006).

As *Oomycotes* they produce sporangia which release numerous swimming zoospores, which move and spread through the water to infect healthy host plants. Zoospores move via flagella in the soil water profile and water films around soil particles, and are chemotactically attracted to exudates from roots and germinating seeds, where they encyst, form cell walls, and initiate an infection of the plant tissue (Schroeder et al., 2013).

The parasites also occupy aquatic ecosystems such as freshwater lakes and streams (Nechwatal et al., 2008) and irrigation systems (Hong and Moorman, 2005). Thus these plant pathogens can spread in irrigation water as well as by contaminated soil.

The aim of this study is to investigate the presence of the *Pythium* species in rivers and soil samples and associated with plant hosts, originating from diverse habitats.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Sampling. Sampling in rivers was done by baiting with rhododendron and oak leaves, placed in a mosquito nets and floating on the water surface for 3 to 10 days, or from collected free floating alder leaves. The released and swimming zoospores are attracted by the floating leaves, infect the leaf tissue and cause brownish lesions.

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1 m
 3 7 (Themann
 and Werres, 2000).
Pythium spp.
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 , Difco).
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 V8 (Werres, 2015).
Pythium
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 V8
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 1-2
 Zeiss Axio
 Imager AxioVision 4.8.2
 7-10
 DNeasy
 Plant Mini Kit (QIAGEN GmbH). PCR
 ITS
 ITS5 (5'-GGA
 AGT AAA AGT CGT AAC AAG G-3')
 ITS4 (5'-TCC TCC GCT TAT TGA TAT
 GC-3') PuReTaq™ Ready-To-Go™

Baiting from soil samples was performed also by rhododendron, oak and alder leaves and maintained in the laboratory. Each soil sample was placed in a separate plastic box, covered by water layer about 1 cm depth and the leaves were positioned on the surface of the water for 3 to 7 days (Themann and Werres, 2000).

Released and swimming zoospores are attracted by the leaves, infect the plant tissue and cause brown lesions on the leaves.

In both cases (soil and river samples) isolation of *Pythium* spp. from leaf spots was made directly on PDA medium (Potato Dextrose Agar, Difco). The single isolates were obtained from transferring hyphae tips from each mycelium colony of fresh PDA or V8 media (vegetable agar) (Werres, 2015).

The assignment of the isolates. Attribution of the collected isolates to genus *Pythium* was based on morphological observations and DNA analyses.

The mycelium mats of the isolates were developed of different media - Carrot agar, V8 agar, Oatmeal agar, Potato dextrose agar and Malt extract agar. Stimulation of the sporangia formation was performed by flooding mycelia plugs with spring water and incubation at room temperature for one-two days. Morphological observations of the formed sporangia and oospores were performed using a microscope Zeiss Axio Imager supplemented with software AxioVision 4.8.2.

DNA isolation was done from 7 to 10-days old mycelia using DNeasy Plant Mini Kit (QIAGEN GmbH). PCR amplification of the ITS region was performed with primers ITS5 (5'-GGA AGT AAA AGT CGT AAC AAG G-3') and ITS4 (5'-TCC TCC GCT TAT TGA TAT GC-3') using PuReTaq™ Ready-To-Go™

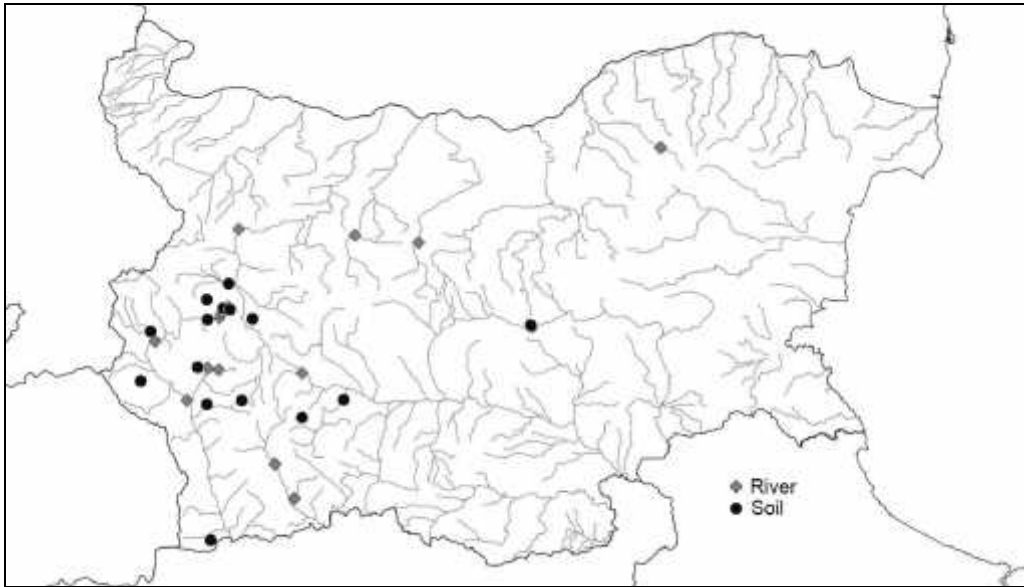
PCR beads (GE Healthcare Life Sciences),
 PCR : 96 °C – 2 min,
 35 of 96 °C – 1 min, 55 °C – 1 min, 72 °C – 2 min
 72 °C – 10 min.
 PCR
 GATC Biotech AG (),
 NCBI (National Center for Biotechnology Information), BLAST (Basic Local Alignment Search Tool).

PCR beads (GE Healthcare Life Sciences), according to the manufacturer's instructions and the following PCR program: 96 °C – 2 min, followed by 35 cycles of 96 °C – 1 min., 55 °C – 1 min., 72 °C – 2 min. and final elongation at 72 °C – 10 min. Purified PCR products were sequenced in GATC Biotech AG (Germany) and sequencing data analyses was performed by comparing with data base in NCBI (National Center for Biotechnology Information) using BLAST search.

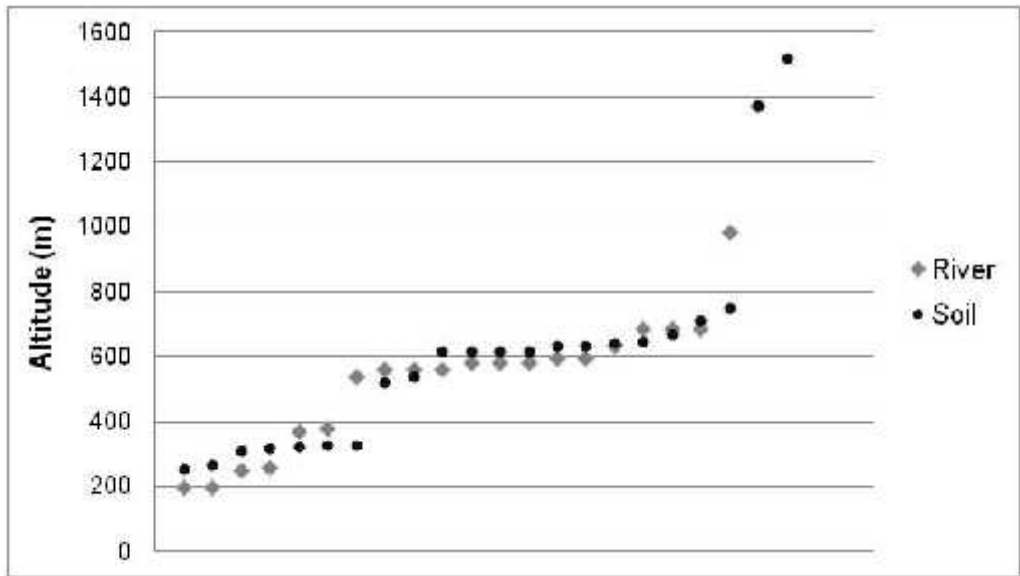
22 *Pythium* spp.
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Pythium spp.
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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Totally 22 *Pythium* spp. were isolated from the soil samples. Among them 7 isolates were obtained from garden trade centers and forest nurseries, 10 from forests areas, 3 from orchards, one from a city park and one from a private yard. Another 20 isolates were collected from 12 Bulgarian rivers – Iskar, Struma, Mesta, Vit, Osam, Perlovska, Vedena, Vladaiska, Petrovichka, Kalnik, Kanina and Beli Lom. They were determined as *Pythium* spp. according to the DNA sequencing of the internal transcribed spacer (ITS) region. Collected data showed that *Oomycotes* organisms of genus *Pythium* appeared to be largely spread across the country presumably in hilly and mountain areas (Figure 1). Depending on the altitude, the most *Pythium* isolates originated from locations between 200 m and 750 m a.s.l., although some isolates were found as high as 1550 m a.s.l. (Figure 2) There were no *Pythium* organisms isolated from rivers' or soil samples collected at low altitude bellow 200 m a.s.l. or from locations at the sea level. Most of the isolates were found in the western part of the country, probably due to the fact that this is predominantly mountain part of the country.



1. *Pythium*
 Fig. 1. The locations of genus *Pythium* organisms found across the country

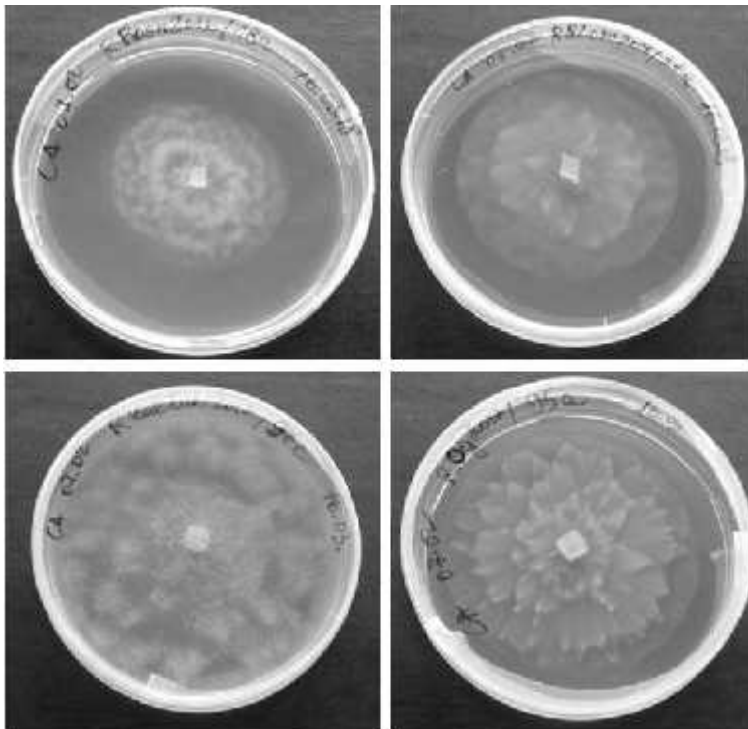


2. *Pythium*
 Fig. 2. Distribution of organisms of genus *Pythium* according to altitude

(3), Various types of colonies were formed by different isolates grown on PDA medium which indicates different species composition of the created

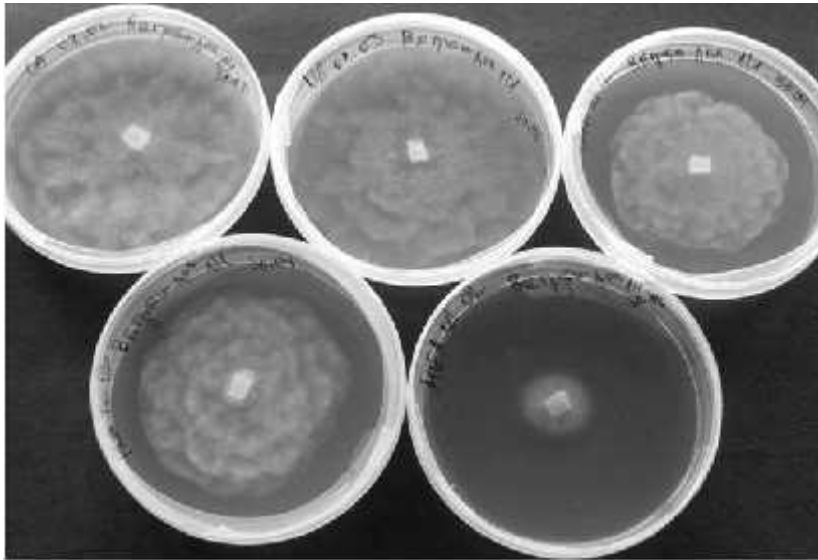
Pythium
 Pythium V8
 Pythium.
 4).

- collection (Figure 3).
 -
 - The most appropriate media for mycelium growth of collected *Pythium* isolates appeared to be carrot agar and V8 agar, followed by oatmeal agar, and potato dextrose agar. The malt extract agar is less suitable medium for the development of the *Pythium* mycelium (Figure 4).
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. 3.

Fig. 3. Different morphology of mycelium colonies of *Pythium* isolates on carrot agar

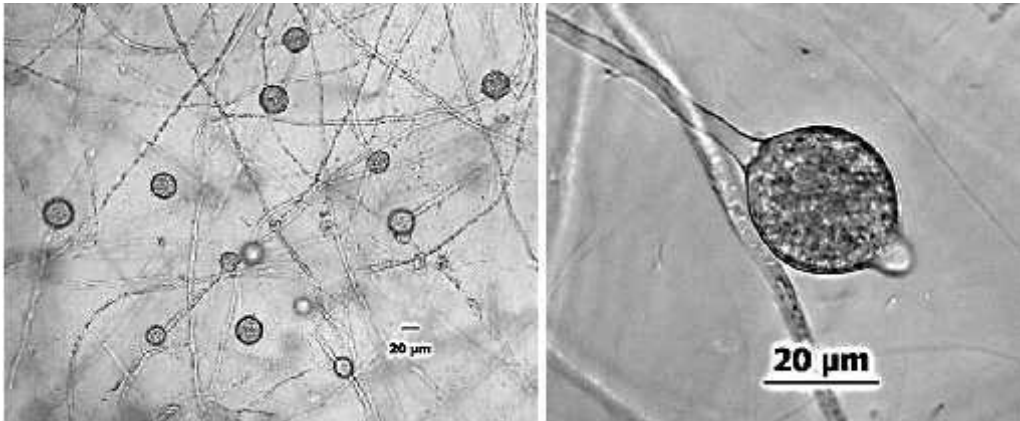


4. *Pythium* 1/1 (Carrot agar, V8 agar, Oatmeal agar, Potato dextrose agar, Malt extract agar)

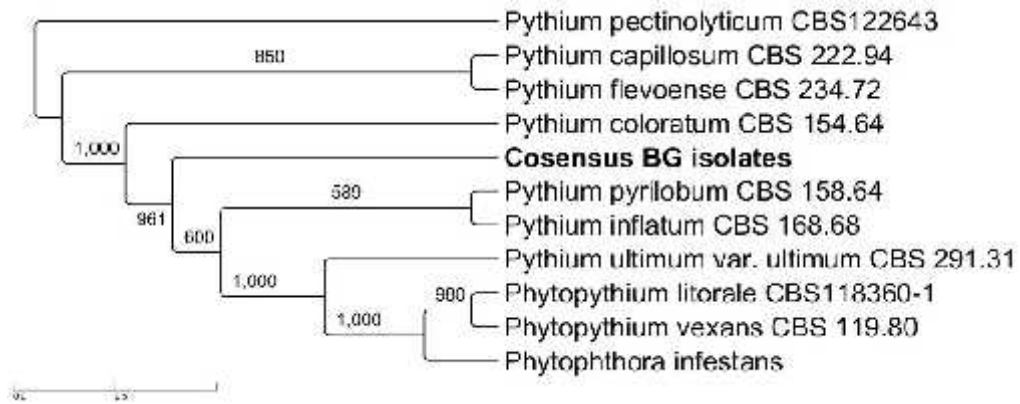
Fig. 4. *Pythium* isolate 1/1 on different agar media (from top left to the bottom right): Carrot agar, V8 agar, Oatmeal agar, Potato dextrose agar, Malt extract agar

Pythium spp. (ITS)
 CBS
Phytophthora spp. (

Most of the isolates formed numerous of sporangia in mycelia plugs flooded with spring water at room temperature for one-two days. Sporangia demonstrated typical for the *Pythium* spp. spherical shape with papilla (Figure 5). Phylogeny of the isolates based on the ITS region is situating them among the *Pythium* isolates from CBS collection and close but separate from the other oomycete organisms such as *Phytophthora* sp. and *Phytopythium* spp. (Figure 6).



5. *Pythium* spp
 Fig. 5. Sporangia formation of the *Pythium* spp



6. *Pythium*
 ITS 4 5
 Fig. 6. Phylogeny of *Pythium* species found in Bulgaria based on the internal transcribed spacers (ITS) 4 and 5

CONCLUSIONS

Pythium

Pythium spp.

- *Oomycote* organisms of genus *Pythium* were found to be largely spread in natural and cultivated soil ecosystems as well as in aquatic ecosystems such as rivers and streams across the territory of Bulgaria. The exact species determination and pathogenicity of the obtained isolates still needs to be confirmed, however the existing inoculum potential of *Pythium* spp. present in soil and rivers is a premise of the occurrence of destructive plant

- diseases in nurseries and irrigated crop
- areas particularly under favorable for the
- development of the pathogen conditions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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12,

Chemical weed control in the production of fruit planting material on the vegetative cherry rootstock Gisela 6

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SUMMARY

2013-2014 .
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400 ml/da),
33
6
(
4 – 250 ml/da),
120
-
150

The study was carried out in 2013-2014 at the Fruit-Growing Institute - Plovdiv. The effect of the soil selective systemic herbicide pendimethalin (Stomp 33 EC – 400 ml/da) on weed infestation and on the growth habits of the vegetative cherry rootstock Gisela 6 and the effect of the contact herbicide of a soil and foliar effect oxyfluorfen (Goal 4F – 250 ml/da) on the grafted plants in a second-year nursery garden were investigated in a field trial. The applied soil herbicides successfully killed the weed vegetation in the first- and in the second-year nursery gardens.

The post-effect of pendimethalin lasted for about 120 days, which provided good conditions for rootstock development at the early stages of vegetation when the weed-crop competition exerts the most suppressing effect.

The soil effect of oxyfluorfen lasted for about 150 days, it controlled weeds during the vegetation period and provided good

conditions for the development of the grafted plants. The application of those two herbicides did not cause an inhibitory effect on the growth of the vegetative rootstock Gisela 6 and the cherry cultivars grafted on it.

Key words: herbicides, weeds, Gisela 6, growth habits, planting material

INTRODUCTION

The production of good quality fruit planting material is the starting point of fruit production, determining to a large extent its effectiveness. The main agrotechnical problem in fruit nurseries is the control of weed vegetation, which competes with the rootstocks for water, light and nutrients.

In case of strong weed infestation, the produced rootstocks are of low quality and they cannot be grafted in the year of planting. Weed control is limited to applying mainly mechanical means (hoeing or manual weeding), which are labor consuming and reduce the economic efficiency of the production of planting material.

That necessitates the study of the effect of different active substances in herbicides on rootstock development with the aim of their application in the production of planting material. In literature, there are data about the different effect of a number of soil- and foliar-applied herbicides on the growth of fruit species used as rootstocks – from lack of phytotoxicity and the production of good quality rootstocks to a very strong toxicity after the application of some active substances contained in the herbicides, causing plant death (Rankova, 2004; Hanson and Schneider, 2008; Rankova, 2011; Rankova and Tityanov, 2013; Rankova and Zhivondov, 2013; Rankova and Tityanov, 2014). The results of a number of previous studies showed

(Rankova, 2004; Hanson and Schneider, 2008; Rankova, 2011; Rankova and Tityanov, 2013; Rankova and Zhivondov, 2013; Rankova and Tityanov, 2014).

(Prodanova-Marinova, 2012; Dimitrova et al., 2014; Prodanova-Marinova et al., 2014; Tsvetanov et al., 2014; Prodanova-Marinova et al., 2016).

6.

5 (Popov, 2008).

400ml/da)

(33

6

- 250 ml/da)

(4

2013-2014 .

(33 - 400ml/da)

6

(4 - 250 ml/da),

15-25

6

15cm.

- that the soil herbicide pendimethalin
 - exhibited satisfactory selectivity in the
 - major rootstocks for fruit species – yellow
 - plum, peach, mahaleb, wild cherry. It is
 - also recommended as a suitable herbicide
 - in the production of vine planting material
 - (Prodanova-Marinova, 2012; Dimitrova et
 - al., 2014; Prodanova-Marinova et al.,
 - 2014; Tsvetanov et al., 2014; Prodanova-
 - Marinova et al., 2016).

- In recent years there has been an
 - increased interest in establishing new
 - cherry plantations on the vegetative
 - rootstock Gisela 6. It induces more
 - vigorous growth than the common
 - rootstock of the same series Gisela 5
 - (Popov, 2008).

- The aim of the present study was to
 - investigate the effect of the soil herbicide
 - pendimethalin (Stomp 33 EC – 400 ml/da)
 - on the growth habits of Gisela 6
 - vegetative rootstock in the first-year
 - nursery garden and the effect of the
 - contact herbicide with soil and foliar
 - activity oxyfluorfen (Goal 4F – 250 ml/da)
 - on the development of the grafted plants
 - in the second-year nursery.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

- The study was carried out in
 - 2013-2014 at the Fruit-Growing Institute -
 - Plovdiv. The effect of the soil selective
 - systemic herbicide pendimethalin (Stomp
 - 33 EC – 400 ml/da) on the weed
 - infestation and the growth habits of the
 - vegetative cherry rootstock Gisela 6 and
 - the effect of the contact herbicide with soil
 - and foliar activity oxyfluorfen (Goal 4F –
 - 250 ml/da) on the grafted plants in a
 - second-year nursery were studied under
 - the conditions of a field trial.

First-year Nursery

- Plants from the vegetative rootstock
 - Gisela 6 were planted in the period 15-25
 - March in a nursery at a planting distance
 - in the row strip of 15 cm. Treatment with
 - the soil herbicide pendimethalin – Stomp
 - 33 EC – 400 ml /da was carried out

ml/da. - 33 - 400
 , 4 -
 30 ,
 30 ,
 (15-20)
 (cm) ,
 (mm). ,
 6 : ,
 2- ,
 2- ,
 4 - 250 ml/da).

immediately after planting. The experiment was set by the standard long-row method, in 4 replications. Control was maintained free of weeds by manual weeding every 30 days. During the period of vegetation the rootstocks were grown following the standard technology.

The efficacy of the applied herbicides during the vegetation season was assessed by reporting the weed infestation in the separate variants in dynamics, every 30 days from the date of treatment until the herbicide effect subsided.

During the vegetation period, observations were made on the growth and development of the plants –growth, external symptoms of toxicity – chlorosis, necrosis, growth suppression.

In the period 15-20 August, the rootstocks were graded for quality, taking into account the biometric parameters of the plant height (h-cm) and the thickness at the place of grafting (mm). Grading for quality of the plants in that period coincided with the grafting period, determined to be the most suitable in our fruit-growing practice.

The rootstocks were grafted with 6 cherry cultivars: 'Summit', 'Bigarreau Burlat', 'Rosita', 'Rosalina', 'Trakiiska hrushtyalka' and 'Kossara'.

Second-year Nursery

In the second-year nursery garden, the cherry trees of different cultivars on the vegetative rootstock Gisela 6 were treated with the contact herbicide with a soil and foliar activity oxyfluorfen (Goal 4F – 250 ml/da). Treatment was carried out at the end of March, before the vegetation season. The effect of the contact herbicide with a soil and foliar effect oxyfluorfen on weed infestation, growth, development and quality of the plants grafted on Gisela 6 rootstock was studied.

The following variants were set: 1. 'Summit'/Gisela 6 (control); 2.

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 (15 cm
 , mm).

'Summit'/Gisela 6 (treated); 3. 'Bigarreau
 Burlat'/Gisela 6 (control); 'Bigarreau
 Burlat'/Gisela 6 (treated); 5.
 'Rosita'/Gisela 6 (control) 6.
 'Rosita'/Gisela 6 (treated); 7. 'Trakiiska
 hrushtyalka'/Gisela 6 (control); 8.
 'Trakiiska hrushtyalka'/Gisela 6 (treated);
 6 9. 'Kossara'/Gisela 6 (control); 10.
 6 'Kossara'/Gisela 6 (treated); 11.
 'Rosalina'/Gisela 6 (control); 12.
 6 'Rosalina'/Gisela 6 (treated). The
 6 experiment was based on the standard
 - long-row method, in 4 replications. Control
 4 was kept free of weeds by manual
 - weeding every 30 days. During the
 vegetation period, the rootstocks were
 grown following the standard technology.

The efficacy of the applied
 herbicides during the vegetation season
 was assessed by reporting the weed
 infestation in the separate variants and
 the duration of the period of herbicide
 efficacy.

During vegetation, visual
 observations were made on plant growth
 and development: development rate,
 external symptoms of toxicity – chlorosis,
 necrosis, growth suppression.

In November the trees were graded
 for quality, reporting the biometric
 characteristics of plant height (h - cm) and
 thickness (15 cm above the place of
 grafting, mm).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- The weed association in the fruit
 - tree nursery established in the
 - experimental field of the Fruit-Growing
 Institute – Plovdiv is characterized as an
 association of an arable type, i.e. the
 predominant weeds are of the group of
 annual early and late spring species. The
 - following annual weed species were
 - reported: ivy leaf speedwell (*Veronica*
 - *hederifolia* L.), common groundsel
 (*Senecio vulgaris* L.), white goosefoot

(*Chenopodium album* L.),
 (*Amaranthus retroflexus* L.),
 (*Portulaca oleracea* L.),
 (*Erigeron canadensis* L.),
 (*Xanthium strumarium* L.)
 (*Setaria viridis* L.).

400 ml/da 33
 ,
 , 3,5-4

120

5

6

- (*Chenopodium album* L.), redroot pigweed
 - (*Amaranthus retroflexus* L.), purslane
 - (*Portulaca oleracea* L.), horseweed
 - (*Erigeron canadensis* L.), rough cockle-
 bur (*Xanthium strumarium* L.) and green
 foxtail (*Setaria viridis* L.). No developing
 weed plants were found in the treated
 variant during the first three months after
 the herbicide treatment. The soil herbicide
 Stomp 33 EC at the applied rate of 400
 ml/da showed very good herbicide
 efficacy of weed control, the duration of
 the herbicide activity being 3,5-4 months.
 That enabled the elimination of the
 competitive impact of weeds on the initial
 stage of rootstock development. The
 herbicide activity subsided about 120
 days after treatment – at the beginning of
 August. Single plants of purslane and
 green foxtail were found in the third
 variant. Achieving a continuous herbicide
 effect for about 4 months after treatment
 provided good conditions for rootstock
 development at the earliest stages of
 vegetation when the weed/crop
 competition had the most suppressing
 effect.

- In the second year nursery, the
 - contact herbicide with a soil and foliar
 - activity oxyfluorfen showed a very good
 control of the weed species in the row
 strip. Thanks to its foliar effect, ephemeral
 and early spring weed species (foxtail
 grass, common chickweed, ivy leaf
 speedwell), which had emerged during
 the treatment period, were destroyed. The
 soil activity of oxyfluorfen lasted about 5
 months. Satisfactory weed control was
 achieved during the vegetation period and
 good conditions for the development of
 the grafted plants were provided. In the
 second half of June the development of
 the following species was reported in the
 control variant: horseweed, purslane and
 Johnson grass.

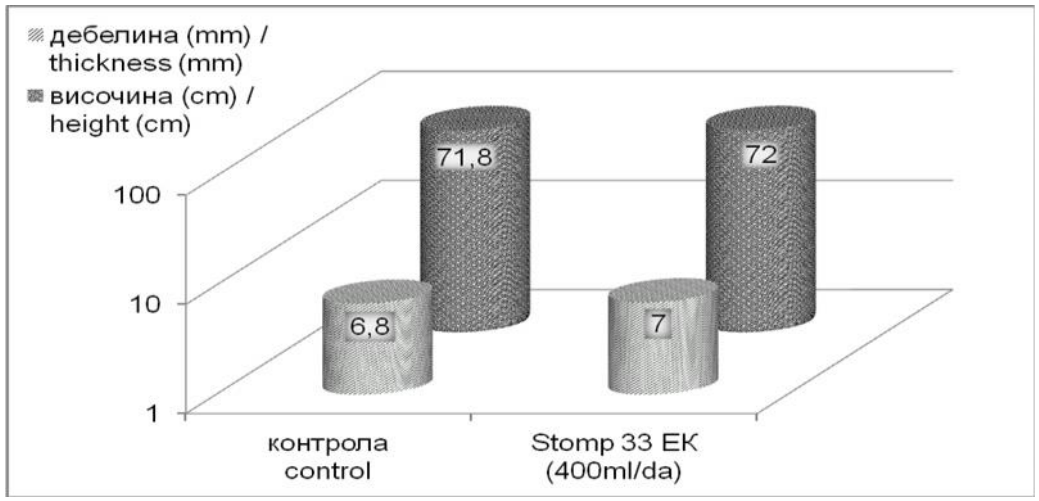
- **Effect of the soil herbicides on**
 - **the vegetative habits of Gisela 6**
 - **rootstock in the first-year nursery and**
 - **the development of the grafted plants**
 - **in the second-year nursery**

6
2).
(1

Gisela 6 rootstock treated with pendimethalin, did not differ in growth and development compared to the control. No visual symptoms of plant phytotoxicity in the treated variant were observed.

The results of the biometric analysis showed that the herbicide-treated plants had a stem height close to that of the control plants. Similar data were reported about the effect of pendimethalin on the other studied characteristic – thickness at the place of grafting. Treatment with pendimethalin showed no negative effect on growth (Figure 1 and Figure 2). The differences between the variants were statistically insignificant. Good quality planting stock was obtained, suitable for grafting in the year of planting.

In the second-year nursery, no visual symptoms of phytotoxicity were observed in the grafted plants, as well as no differences in their growth rates after treatment with oxyfluorfen.



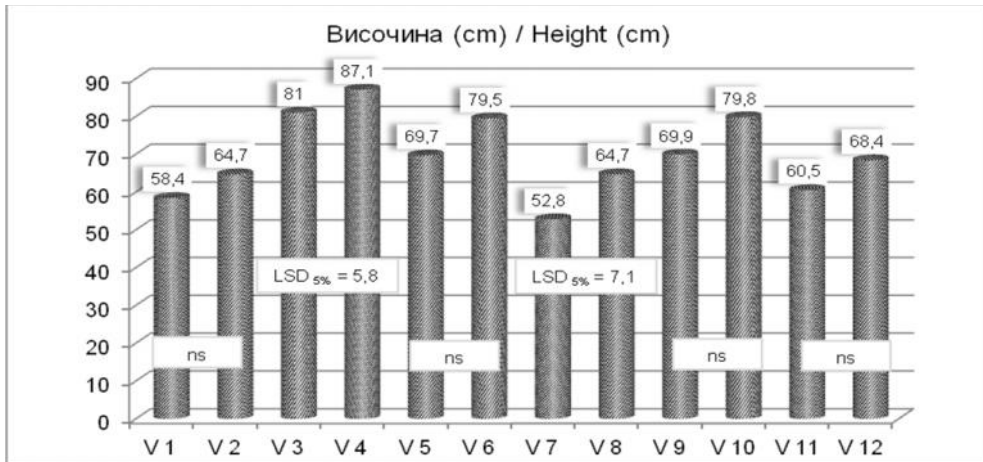
ns
.1. ml/da) (33 – 400

a 6
Fig. 1. Effect of the soil herbicide pendimethalin (Stomp 33 EC – 400 ml/da) on height and thickness at the place of grafting of the vegetative rootstock Gisela 6

4 250 ml/da

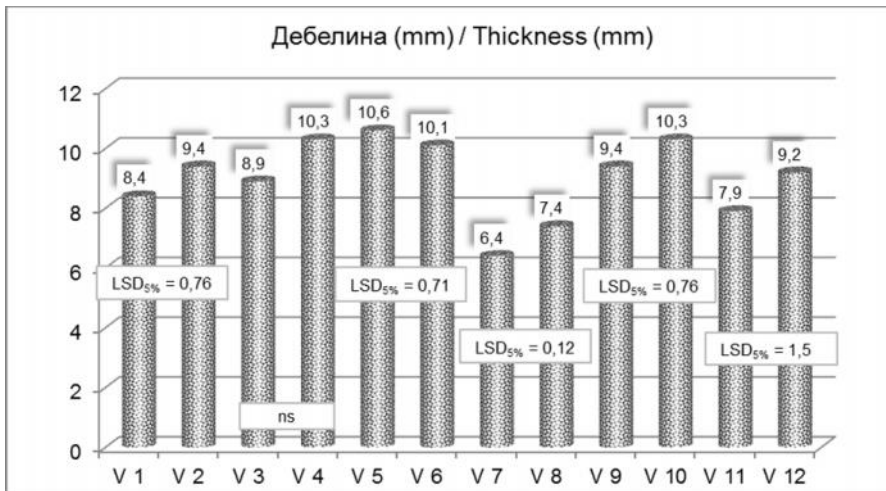
The results of the biometric analysis showed that the application of Goal 4F at the rate of 250 ml/da did not

- cause growth suppression. A tendency was observed that the values of the biometric characteristics of the plants in the treated variants were close to the control or higher, which confirms that treatment with oxyfluorfen had no phytotoxic effect on the growth of the cultivar/rootstock combinations.



2. (4 – 250 ml/da) (cm)

Fig. 2. Effect of oxyfluorfen (Goal 4 F – 250 ml/da) on the tree height (cm)



3. (15 cm) (4 – 250 ml/da) (mm)

Fig. 3. Effect of oxyfluorfen (Goal 4 F – 250 ml/da) on the tree stem thickness (15 cm above the place of grafting, mm)

6,
140 ml/da
(Rankova et al., 2016).
7% -
320 /da -
- 0,85%

The economic efficiency of the overall chemical control system for the production of planting material of 'Kossara', 'Bigarreau Burlat' and 'Trakiiska hrushtyalka' cultivars grafted on Gisela 6 was evaluated, including a double treatment with Fusilade forte at the rate of 140 ml/da for the control of annual and perennial grassy weeds during vegetation (Rankova et al., 2016). Data showed that cost effectiveness and return on investment were 8% and 7% higher, respectively. The added value of the chemical control in the nursery was 320 BGN/da more than the control, while the alternative costs were very low: 0,85% of the yield.

That gives reason to recommend the use of the studied herbicides in the production of fruit trees on the vegetative rootstock Gisela 6. The application of chemical weed control allows the production of cheaper and good quality planting material using less manual labour, which is quite unattractive

CONCLUSIONS

1.
(4) 33)
120
150
2.

1. The applied soil herbicides pendimethalin (Stomp 33 EC) and oxyfluorfen (Goal 4F) successfully eliminated weed vegetation in the first- and second-year nurseries. The duration of the herbicide effect of pendimethalin was about 120 days, which provided good conditions for the development of the rootstocks at the earliest stages of vegetation, when the weed/crop competition had the most suppressing effect. The soil activity of oxyfluorfen continued for about 150 days and ensured weed free growing conditions for the development of the grafted plants during the vegetation season.

2. A suppressing effect on the tree growth was not established after the application of those two herbicides either

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Inheritance of some apricot fruit attractiveness characteristics

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SUMMARY

Fruit appearance is one of the most important characteristics which determine their commercial value. Fruit attractiveness is highly dependent on their size, shape and colour. The study was conducted at a breeding orchard of the Fruit Growing Institute - Plovdiv, Bulgaria and describes fruit biometry, shape, ground colour and over colour of three apricot hybrid families.

The largest fruits were obtained out of the parental combination 'Modesto' x 'Harcot' and the smallest – from 'Lito' x 'Silistrenska ranna'.

The fruits obtained from the hybrids of the crossbreed 'Harlayne' x 'Harcot' were also large but tend to get smaller when the trees are overloaded.

The shape that dominates for the 'Lito' x 'Silistrenska ranna' hybrids is the round one. These fruits are with light orange ground colour and very delicate over colour.

For the other two hybrid families, the

2015-2017

Prunus armeniaca,

dominant fruit shape is ovate. Most of their fruits are with medium orange ground colour and attractive red blush. For future breeding programs facing to a genotype with attractive fruit appearance, we recommend as parental cultivars 'Modesto' and 'Harcot'.

Key words: *Prunus armeniaca*, fruit, inheritance

INTRODUCTION

(Bassi and Audergon, 2006)

(Egea et al., 2010). T

Apricot fruit quality is associated with attributes such as appearance, texture, taste and colour. Fruit quality is one of the most important and highlighted breeding perspectives (Bassi and Audergon, 2006) when a new cultivar is created. It is also fundamental for the acceptance of apricot cultivars by consumers (Egea et al., 2010). The traditional cultivars, which are adapted to the environment, provide standard quality levels for this very popular and highly appreciated fruit.

(2002),
35 mm

(Azodanlou et al., 2003).

(Moreau-Rio, 2001).

The official standard of apricot quality for fresh consumption relies on the fruit caliber. In Bulgaria according to the Ministry of agriculture, food and forestry (2002) fruits with diameter above 35 mm could be classified with excellent quality. Fruit appearance is the fruit quality attribute which determines apricot commercial value. Characteristics such as colour, size, shape and external defects of the fruits predominantly determine the choice made by the customers on the market (Azodanlou et al., 2003).

Surveys conducted on consumer appreciation indicate that apricots have the image of a tasty fruit, but with market quality not always up to the consumers' expectations (Moreau-Rio, 2001). Due to the current situation of high competition in the markets with the presence of numerous new cultivars and other fruits and foods, to realize the apricot production the fruits should be very

<p>(Gatti et al., 2009).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - attractive for the customers. Breeding and marketing should work together to release new cultivars able to face both horticultural and market requirements to get and maintain long-term premium prices (Gatti et al., 2009).
<p>(Krška et al., 2009).</p>	<p>As apricot fruits are mostly consumed fresh, for the breeders, it is necessary to enhance the fruit attractiveness traits like the shade of over colour, fruit size and also flesh firmness (Krška et al., 2009).</p>
<p>(Dirlewanger et al., 1999).</p>	<p>Most parameters determining the attractiveness (colour, size, shape etc.) of the fruits are genetically highly variable and highly dependent on the environmental conditions (Dirlewanger et al., 1999). Traits such as skin ground colour, over colour and fruit weight are inherited quantitatively and are under polygenic control (Salazar et al., 2013).</p>
<p>(Salazar et al., 2013).</p>	<p>The knowledge of the ways of inheritance would help the breeding process by making a proper choice of parental cultivars in order to create genotypes with highly appreciated fruits.</p>
<p>(2010),</p>	<p>Customers in different countries have different requirements for the fruits they buy and with the introduction of new cultivars, their preferences often change. According to Egea et al.(2010) consumers in Spain appreciate the beauty and aromatic flavor of high-quality apricots, those with an orange ground colour, intense red blush, orange and juicy flesh and high organoleptic qualities.</p>
<p>(Audergon et al., 2010).</p>	<p>The breeding programs meet the market requirements and in France, a new apricot line characterized by a deep red-purple over colour covering nearly the whole surface of the apricot fruit was developed under the frame of a 'Rubisco®' trademark (Audergon et al., 2010). In this study, we investigated more detailed the Bulgarian consumers' preferences and we collated them with the results from the</p>

- apricot breeding program of the Fruit Growing Institute - Plovdiv.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The aim of this study was to investigate the ways of inheritance of some fruit quality traits in three apricot hybrid populations, obtained in a breeding program of the Fruit Growing Institute - Plovdiv. The consumers' preferences study was conducted to assess which fruits are most valuable and to determine which of the parental combinations would be more useful in future breeding programs.

This investigation was conducted during the period 2015-2018, in a breeding orchard of the Fruit Growing Institute - Plovdiv, Bulgaria. In order to analyze the genetic control of fresh market apricot quality, the genetic variation of some attractiveness attributes was analyzed in tree apricot hybrid families – 'Harlayne' 'Harcot', 'Modesto' 'Harcot' and 'Lito' 'Silistrenska ranna'. The hybrids were obtained by the method of classical fruit breeding and planted in 2011. To determine the fruit traits an average sample of 25 fruits, of each hybrid was taken. To determine the descriptive characteristics of the fruits descriptors UPOV and IBPGR were used. The biometric data on all average samples of fruits were measured with a digital calliper. In 2018 a poll was conducted for a precise study of the Bulgarian consumers' preferences. The fruit biometry data, for the three crossbreeds, were statistically processed by Duncan's test (Steele and Torrie, 1980) using IBM SPSS Statistics 19 software.

2015-2018
2011
25
UPOV
IBPGR.
2018
(Steele and Torrie, 1980)
IBM SPSS Statistics 19.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- During the three years of the study, were obtained fruits from a small number of hybrids from the crossbreed 'Lito'

2015 .	(1).	-
11.	4,	2016 - 5	2017-
	2015 .		
	37		2016 .
			46
2015 .		2017 . -	50.
			44
2017 - 72.		2016 - 50	
	x		
mm,	(FH)	38,73 mm	39,16
mm	(FWD) -	35,59 mm	38, 63
mm.	(FT) -	37,66 mm	40,99
37,78 .	(FW)	2015 .	30,97 g.,
	2016 .	34,97 g.	2017
		46,16 mm	
43,69 mm,		- 39,05 mm	
41,91 mm,		- 42,19-45,27 mm	
		- 44,12 g.	45, 95 g.
		x	
mm,		42,76 mm	45,59
mm			37,06
40,22 mm,		- 40,74 mm -	
43,90 mm			38,49 g.
45,54 g.			

'Silistrenska ranna' (Table 1). In 2015 the number of trees that had fruits was 4, in 2016-5 and in 2017-11. From the hybrid family, 'Modesto' 'Harcot' in 2015 were measured the fruits of 37 hybrids. In 2016 were obtained fruits from 46 of the hybrids and in 2017 – from 50. In 2015, from the third parental combination, 'Harlayne' 'Harcot' fruited 44 of the seedlings, in 2016 - 50 and in 2017 - 72.

After the biometric analysis of the hybrid fruits obtained from the crossbreed 'Lito' x 'Silistrenska ranna', the mean values for their height (FH), in the three years of the study, were between 38,73 mm and 39,16 mm, width (FWD) - 35,59 mm and 38,63 mm and thickness (FT) - 37,66 mm and 40,99 mm. Fruit weight (FW) varied from 30,97 g in 2015 to 37,78 g in 2016. In 'Modesto' x 'Harcot', the linear dimensions of the fruits were widely variable between the years. The average height of the fruits in the hybrid family was 46,16 mm to 43,69 mm, width - 39,05 mm to 41,91 mm, thickness - 42,19-45,27 and fruit weight - 44,12- 45, 95 g. For the third crossbreed 'Harlayne' x 'Harcot', the calculated mean values for fruit height were between 42,76 mm and 45,59 mm, their width was on average from 37,06 mm to 40,22 mm, thickness - 40,74 mm - 43,90 mm and the fruit weight varied from 38,49 g to 45,54 g.

The variation analysis clearly shows that the standard deviation of linear dimensions in the offspring of the three parental combinations is of lower value, i.e. these traits show low segregation rates in the offspring. The fruit weight is the characteristic that shows higher segregation rates. Largest fruits were obtained from the parental combination 'Modesto' 'Harcot' and the smallest from 'Lito' x 'Silistrenska ranna'. After Duncan's multiple range test between the data for the three crossbreeds, it can be said that differences between 'Modest' 'Harcot'

2015 2016
2017

- and 'Lito' 'Silistrenska ranna' are statistically significant. In 2015 and 2016, the fruits obtained from 'Harlayne' 'Harcot' hybrids were large sized. In 2017, when the trees were overloaded, all hybrids showed a tendency to produce smaller fruits. In this year the difference between the mean values for 'Harlayne' 'Harcot' hybrid family and those for 'Lito' x 'Silistrenska ranna' was statically non-significant.

1.

Table 1. Biometry analyses of the fruits obtained of the three hybrid families

Fruit biometry (mm)	Lito Sil. Ranna		Modesto Harcot		Harlayne Harcot	
	Number of hybrids	x/S	Number of hybrids	x/S	Number of hybrids	x/S
2015						
(FH)	6	37,83±5,04 b	39	46,16±4,64 a	46	45,59±3,77 a
(FWD)	6	35,59±5,22 b	39	40,18±3,86 a	46	39,49±2,95 a
(FT)	6	37,66±5,64 b	39	43,97±4,27 a	46	43,90±3,23 a
(FW)	6	30,97±12,74 b	39	45,95±11,88 a	46	44,28±9,21 a
2016						
(FH)	7	39,16±2,44 b	48	45,98±3,75 a	52	44,69±4,14 a
(FWD)	7	38,63±4,02 b	48	41,91±3,87 a	52	40,22±3,18 ab
(FT)	7	40,99±3,78 b	48	45,27±3,82 a	52	43,45±3,17 a
(FW)	7	37,78±10,28 b	48	52,15±11,72 a	52	45,54±9,34 a
2017						
(FH)	13	38,76±3,37 b	52	43,69±4,60 a	74	42,76±4,52 a
(FWD)	13	38,04±2,78 a	52	39,05±4,61 a	74	37,06±3,65 a
(FT)	13	40,48±3,35 a	52	42,19±5,18 a	74	40,74±4,06 a
(FW)	13	34,97±7,62 b	52	44,12±13,56 a	74	38,49±10,12 ab

*Different letters in the same row indicated significant difference (p<0.05)

(Paunovi , 1987).
2006).

(B lan et al.,
,

- Fruit shape is a genetically very stable trait (Paunovi , 1987). The oval apricot shape is the dominant one (B lan et al., 2006). After the visual determination of the shapes of the fruits obtained from the parental combination 'Lito' x 'Silistrenska ranna', we can say that the great number of hybrids has fruits

(2).

B lan et al. (2006),

2015

Noè and Eccher (1996)

50%

with round shape (Table 2). In our case, the two parental cultivars have rounded fruits so when combining two recessive genotypes it is normal in the progeny to dominate that phenotype.

During the three years of the study, in the two hybrid families 'Modesto' 'Harcot' and 'Harlayne' x 'Harcot', the conclusion made by B lan is confirmed - in their generation dominate the oval shaped fruits. In 2015 in 'Harlayne' x 'Harcot' there are single individuals with an elliptical shape of their fruits. This is not observed over the next two years and is most likely due to the impact of the climatic factors and these hybrids are with oval shaped fruits in the next years.

Some authors report the shape variation under the influence of the environmental factors. Noè and Eccher (1996) found the apple shape could be influenced even by the light – when the trees are shaded increases the length / diameter ratio of the fruits.

Fruit colour is extremely important for customers' appreciation. The cultivar 'Silistrenska ranna' cultivar has fruits with very delicate bright orange-yellow skin ground colour, covered with a medium intensive red-orange blush. The other parental cultivar 'Lito' has fruits with medium orange skin ground colour, with extensive bright red over colour. The fruits obtained from the progeny of these two cultivars resemble to a greater extent 'Silistrenska ranna'– the light skin ground colour of the fruits is dominating. Their over colour is red with different hues - pink or orange-red, most of which are of low intensity. It covers a small relative area of the fruit surface.' Modesto' has medium orange fruit skin ground colour. It's over colour covers up to 50% of the fruit surface and has medium intensity. 'Harcot' has dark orange coloured fruits, covered around 75% with intense bright red over colour. In the progeny of these

75%

50%

75%

50%

(Bureau et al., 2009).

(Mazza and Miniati, 1993).

75%

- two cultivars dominate the medium orange fruits with intensive or medium intensive red over colour. The relative area of the blush, of most of the fruits, is up to 50% of their surface. A big group of hybrids have extensive over colour with a relative area up to 75%. 'Harlayne' is a cultivar with medium orange coloured fruits, covered with a red medium intensive over colour with a small relative area. With highest frequency in the progeny are the hybrids with medium orange coloured fruits with red over colour. The biggest group of hybrids has fruits with a medium relative area of the blush – up to 50%.

The fruit skin ground colour is segregating in the progeny of all three hybrid families. In the three generations, the parent with lightly coloured fruits dominates over the other one and most hybrids inherit the lighter fruit skin colour. The red over colour is the most attractive feature of the apricots and has a great impact on their commercial value. It is determined by the concentration of anthocyanin in the fruit skin and depends highly on the genotype and the environmental factors as light intensity, radiation, irrigation etc. (Bureau et al; 2009). It is highly appreciated and pursued trait in the breeding programs (Mazza and Miniati, 1993). The dominating, in the progeny of the crossbreeds 'Modesto' 'Harcot' and 'Harlayne' 'Harcot' intensive or medium intensive bright red over colour is preferred not only by the breeders but and by the consumers. In some countries the larger the area it covers the more attractive the fruits are. In these two crossbreeds are obtained sufficient number of hybrids which fruits are covered up to 75% with red blush.

2.

Table 2. Description of the fruits of the three hybrid families

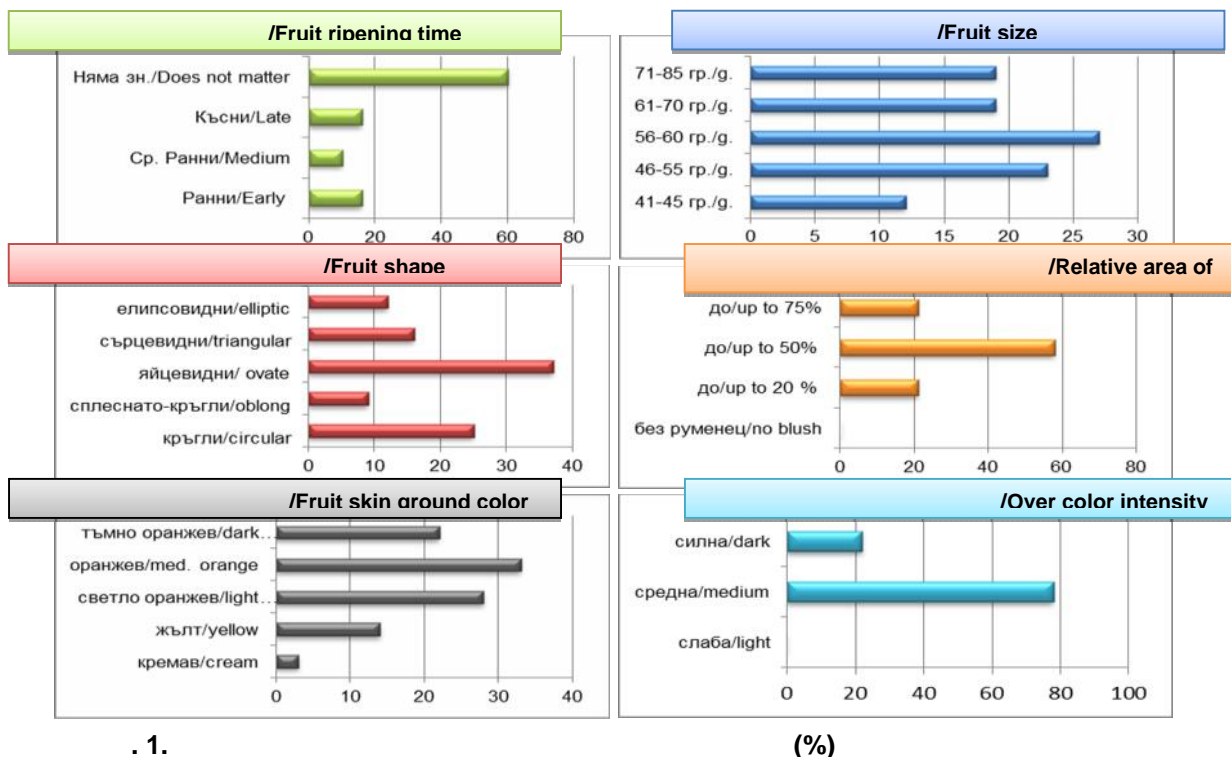
/Investigated traits	/Number of hybrids								
	Lito Sil. Ranna			Modesto Harcot			Harlayne Harcot		
()/Fruit Shape (ventral view)	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
/round	2	4	8	6	10	5	9	5	5
/ovate	2	1	3	31	36	45	29	45	67
/elliptic	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0
Skin ground colour	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
yellow-orange	0	2	6	3	3	2	0	0	0
light orange	4	3	5	6	14	9	9	9	7
med. orange	0	0	0	19	26	38	28	29	51
dark orange	0	0	0	9	3	1	7	12	14
Fruit over colour	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
/red	1	1	6	27	28	47	36	40	52
/orange-red	2	2	1	7	16	1	6	8	17
/pink	1	1	4	2	0	2	2	3	2
/missing	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
Intensity of over colour	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
/light	3	4	6	7	14	9	15	20	27
/medium	1	1	5	8	19	26	14	21	22
/dark	0	0	0	21	12	15	15	10	22
Relative area of over colour	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
/to 20%	1	0	6	8	8	1	9	10	16
25-50%	3	6	5	17	19	35	23	27	44
50-75%	0	0	0	12	16	14	12	12	11
/more than 75%	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	2	1

Although fruit taste is the most important to the consumers, on the market they make their choice according to the fruit appearance and attractiveness. For most of the interviewed Bulgarian apricot consumers (60 % of them), the fruit ripening time does not matter and they buy apricots from the beginning of the season till its end (Figure 1). There are customers for all fruit sizes but the most desirable, preferred by 27% of the interviewed persons, are the medium to large sized

56-60 g. - Egea et al (2010), Audergon et al (2010)

50%

- fruits which average weight is around 56-60 g. The ovate and round shapes are the most appreciated for the apricot fruits. The preferences of the bulgarian customers for fruit colouration are slightly different than the preferences in other countries (Egea et al., 2010; Audergon et al., 2010; Mazza and Miniati, 1993). The people interviewed for this study prefer fruits with medium orange or light orange skin ground colour with not so intensive and extensive over colour. According to the bulgarian customers, the best apricot fruits for fresh consumption have ovate shape, medium to large size, medium orange skin ground colour, and medium intensive over colour covering up to 50% of the fruit surface.



1.
Fig. 1. Preferences of the consumers (%)

CONCLUSIONS

The segregation of the investigated traits in the progeny of the crossbreeds 'Modesto' 'Harcot' and 'Harlayne' 'Harcot' is very favorable for the breeding programs. The dominating in their progeny traits are most appreciated by the Bulgarian customers. For these two crossbreeds, it is more likely to be obtained genotypes which would face the Bulgarian market requirements. A big number of them would face also the international market preferences. The three cultivars 'Modesto', 'Harcot' and 'Harlayne' are a proper choice for parents in future breeding programs facing to genotypes with attractive fruits. Although the fruits obtained of the crossbreed 'Lito' 'Silistrenska ranna' are not the most preferred, their size and light colouration make them suitable for processing and drying.

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State-of-the-art of walnut production and perspectives for development in Bulgaria

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SUMMARY

- Today, there is a growing interest in walnut production, which is explained by the good domestic and international market conditions. The increased interest is due to the adopted state policy in Bulgaria, providing high subsidies and stimulating projects on that fruit species. Walnut kernels are among the most valued fruits, enjoying a high demand in the global market.

- According to FAO, their high fat and protein content determines them as a food that plays an important role in the nutrition of the world population. However, the improvement of walnut production and its intensification are continuous processes, which need acquiring new knowledge about the crop and the technical and technological advances. One of the current tasks faced by the Bulgarian researchers, is the improvement of planning and management of the irrigation process. For solving that task, it is important to identify the water needs of walnut trees through the different phenological stages and depending on

the tree age and to adapt the microirrigation systems under the specific soil and climatic conditions of Bulgaria.

The scarcity of such information is particularly needed during the juvenile period of the plantations. The need for technical and technological improvement is also important concerning fertilization and plant protection where production efficiency can be achieved by the application of fertilizers, pesticides and other agrochemicals through irrigation water, known as chemigation.

Key words: walnut, production, intensification

Increasing interest in walnut production is explained by the good domestic and international market conditions. The increased interest is due to the adopted state policy, which provides high subsidies and stimulates projects related to that fruit species. Walnut has also other advantages that make it attractive to farmers. Walnut fruits have a good storage capacity and high transportability, allowing their marketing at the most appropriate moment.

Demand for walnut fruits is unlimited on both domestic and international markets. The complete mechanization of the processes not only reduces the production costs, but also greatly facilitates the growers.

An important advantage is the long life of the trees, including the long productive period (Djouvinov et al., 2003). The ultimate age of fruit-bearing was not established (Nedev et al., 1983). According to Kralingen et al. (2010) industrial plantations were productive for at least 40 years.

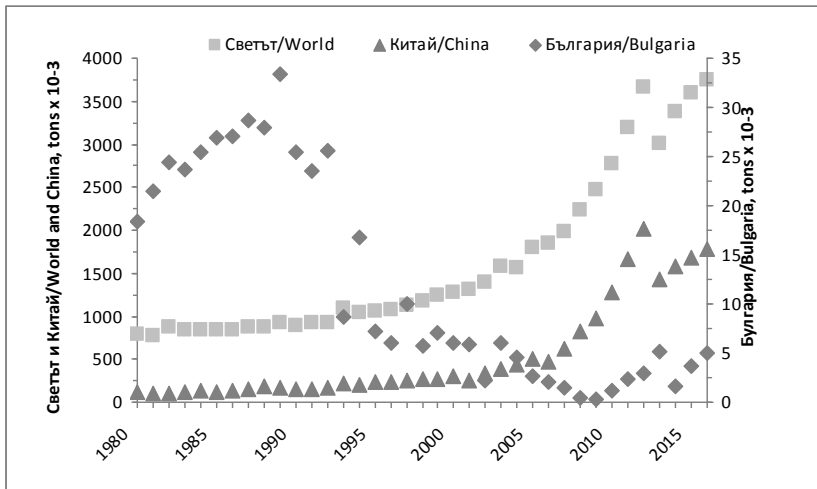
From a practical point of view, almost all the organs of the walnut tree can be used. Vitamin C and other

(Djouvinov et al., 2003).

(Nedev et al., 1983). Kralingen et al. 2010)

vit
 ,
 vit
 (Tsurkan et al.,1984).
 (Germain et al.,1999).
 (Lemus, 2010; Gao et al., 2010).
 FAOSTAT
 2016 .
 3747549 t.
 1785879 t ,
 607814 t, 405281 t,
 195000 t,
 80 %
 29-
 4959 t.
 20 -
 1980-2016 .
 1.
 795 10³ t
 1980 . 3747 10³ t 2016 .
 1960-1980 .
 80-
 64%

- biologically highly active substances are extracted from the green leaves and vitamin C along with iodine and juglone are produced from the green nuts (Tsurkan et al., 1984). Walnut kernels improve heart and brain function (Germain et al., 1999).
 - Walnut kernels are among the most valued, enjoying a high demand in the global market. According to FAO, their high fat and protein content determines them as a food that plays an important role in the nutrition of the world population.
 - The delayed return on investment compared to other fruit species discourages some of the producers from entering the business. This inconvenience can be largely overcome by intensifying the production technology, as could be seen in some leading countries in walnut production (Lemus, 2010; Gao et al., 2010).
 - According to FAOSTAT data, the world walnut fruit production in 2016 was 3747549 t. The largest producer was China with annual production of 1785879 tonnes, followed by the US with 607814 t, Iran with 405281 t and Turkey with 195000 t, the four countries providing nearly 80% of the world production. According to the same statistics, Bulgaria was ranked in 29th place with annual production of 4959 t.
 - The trends in walnut production in Bulgaria, China and the top 20 producing countries in the world during the period 1980-2016 are presented in Fig. 1. Data show an increased development and almost fivefold increase from 795x10³ t in 1980 to 3747x10³ t in 2016. In the period from 1960 to 1980 Europe was the leading producer, the major producing countries being France, Spain, Greece, Italy. In the 1980s, Asia reached the production level of Europe and surpassed it, taking the first place. Today, 64% of the world production is provided by Asia.

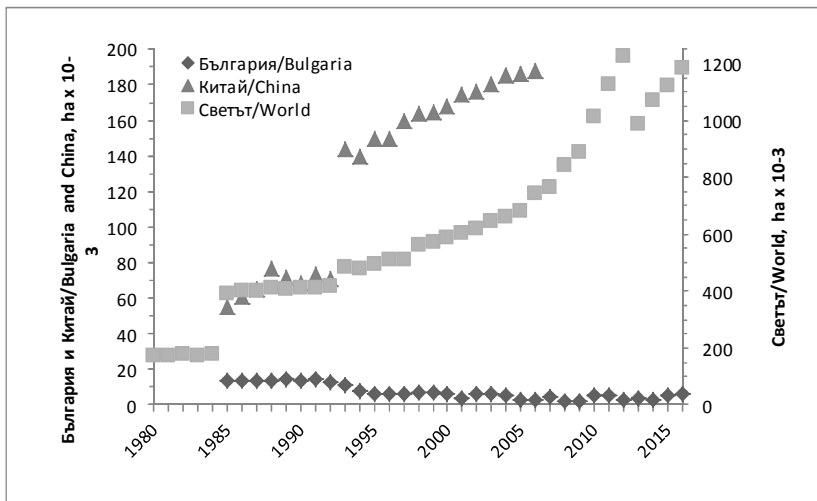


1. () 1980 2016
FAOSTAT, 2018

Fig. 1. Production of walnut fruit (metric tons) from 1980 till 2016 in Bulgaria, China and total in the world (data from FAOSTAT, 2018)

2.

Thirty-five-year data about the areas planted with walnut trees, are presented in Figure 2. The correlation between the planted areas and walnut fruit production is obvious. This fact can also be seen as an evidence of the extensive nature of production.



2. () 1980 2012
FAOSTAT, 2018

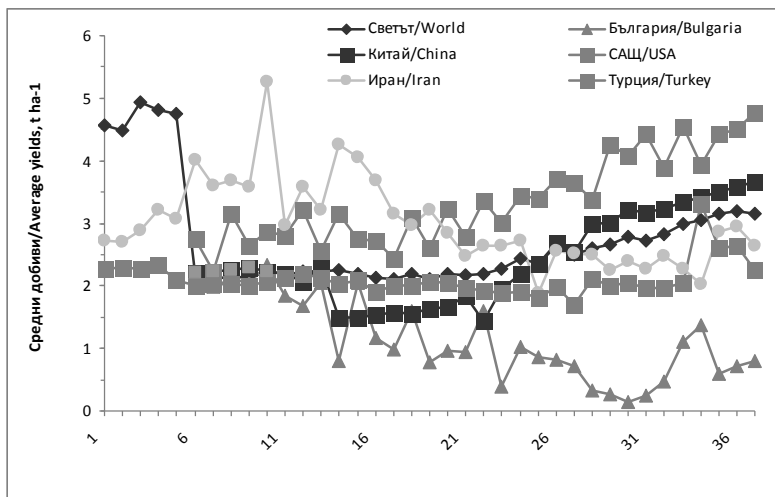
Fig. 2. Area occupied by walnut plantations from 1980 till 2016 in Bulgaria, China and total in the world (data from FAOSTAT, 2018)

(3) ,

2,5-3 t/ha

4 5 t/ha,
t/ha.

Data on average yields (Figure 3) shows that they have been steadily increasing over the last decade on a global scale. That confirms the fact that highly productive cultivars have been used and modern cultivation technologies are applied. Therefore, an average yield of 2,5-3 t/ha is absolutely normal to be obtained from modern walnut plantations. The yields in the leading producing countries – US and Iran – vary within 4 and 5 t/ha, and in China the yield is about 3 t/ha. Against this background, yields in Bulgaria are extremely unsatisfactory and at the same time reveal the unrealized production potential in the sector.



. 3.

1980 . 2016 .

(FAOSTAT, 2018)

Fig. 3. Average yields of walnut fruit from 1980 till 2016 in Bulgaria, other countries and average for the world (data from FAOSTAT, 2018)

50-
(Velkov et al., 1951).
ha. 1980 .
1628 ha.

By the middle of the 1950s, walnut trees in Bulgaria were grown mainly by amateurs, usually planted as single trees in vineyards, fields and along the roads (Velkov et al., 1951). Later, walnut plantations began to increase and in 1980 reached their peak of 19000 ha. After 1980, in Bulgaria, there is a continuous decrease of the planted areas, which reached their minimum of 1628 ha in 2008.

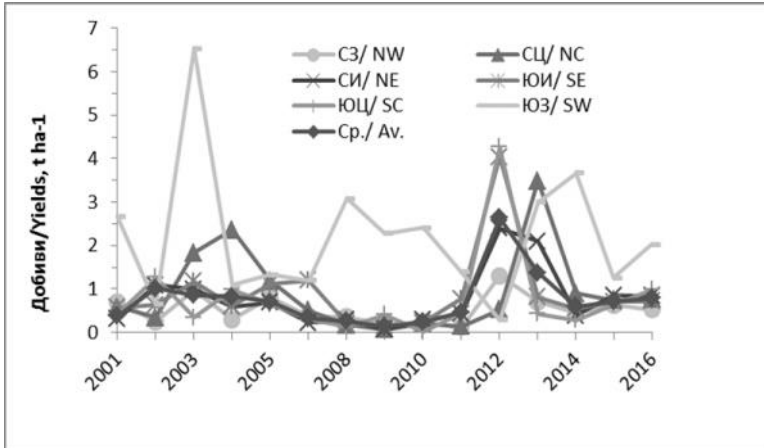
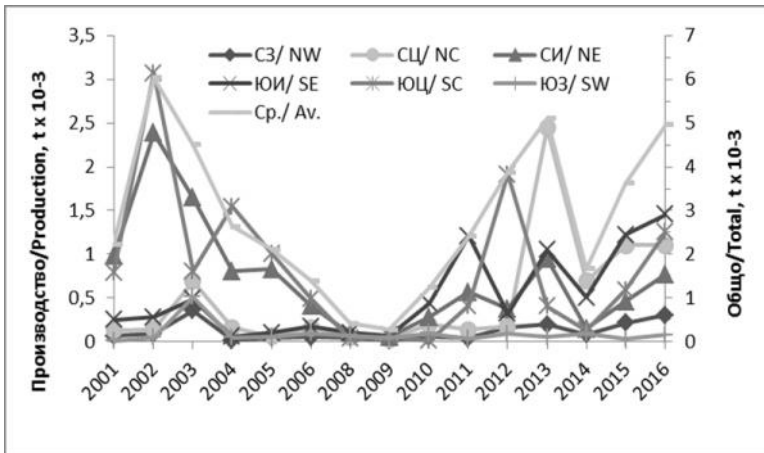
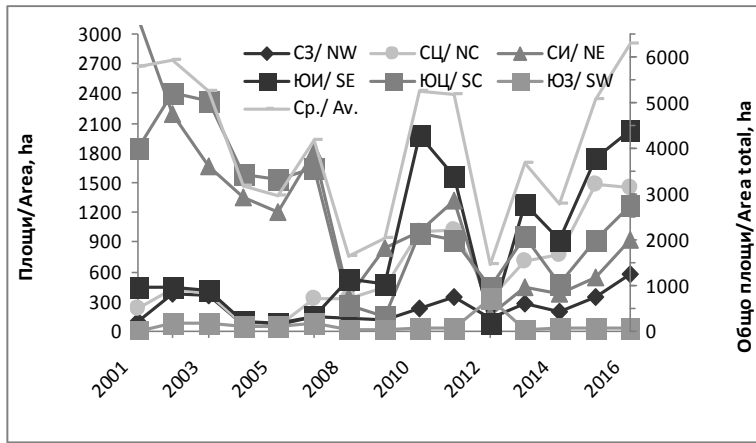
10
o
0,13%
4
2016
2021 ha, - 922 ha,
- 1454 ha
- 1267 ha.
578 ha, - 38 ha.
2001 – 2016
757 kg/ha.
137 kg/ha (2009 .),
1113 kg/ha (2012 .).
20-
1000 – 2000

In the last 10 years an increased interest in walnut production was observed in Bulgaria, as the European programmes stimulate the establishment of new walnut plantations. Market expansion is also an important element in the development of walnut production. Domestic production is small and the country has a modest share in European and even less in global walnut production. Bulgaria provides 0,13% of the world production.

Data of the Bulgarian Ministry of Agriculture and Food on walnut production, planted areas and yields obtained by regions over the last fifteen years, are presented in Figure 4. In 2016 the regional distribution of the plantations in the country was, as follows: South-East region – 2021 ha, North-East – 922 ha, North Central – 1454 ha and South Central – 1267 ha. Walnut orchards in North-West region occupy a smaller area of 578 ha, and in South-West region – only 38 ha.

On average for the period 2001 – 2016, the yields obtained in Bulgaria were 757 kg/ha. The lowest reported yield was 137 kg/ha (2009) and the highest – 1113 kg/ha (2012).

For the studied period, Bulgarian walnut production significantly lagged behind and it cannot be compared to leading producers in the world. There are many reasons for the unsatisfactory state-of-the-art of the sector: neglecting old morally and physically depreciated plantations; use of old fashion and extensive cultivation technology; lack of irrigation; low fertility of the species compared to the other fruit species; unsatisfactory level of agro-technology; delayed entry into fruit-bearing. Despite the poor state-of-the-art of walnut production in Bulgaria and lagging far behind the leading producers in the world and in the region, the country is among top 20 world exporters of walnut fruits, the annual export being about 1000 – 2000 tonnes, according to FAO data.



. 4.

2001-2016 . (

, <http://www.mzh.government.bg>)

Fig. 4. Production, occupied area and yields of walnut fruit by regions and total for Bulgaria for the period 2001-2016 (data from the Agrostistics Dept. of the Bulgarian Ministry of Agriculture and Food, <http://www.mzh.government.bg>)

The review shows that for the past thirty-five years walnut fruit production has increased as a result of the increased areas planted with walnut trees.

On the other hand, sustainable development and the continuously decreasing areas of agricultural land imply an improvement in the productivity and economic efficiency of walnut production. Obviously, multidimensional measures are needed to solve the problems.

First, it is necessary to improve the technological discipline. Bulgaria is one of the countries with the potential to increase yields two to three times within the framework of the traditional walnut production technology. However, a qualitative leap can only be achieved by intensifying walnut production, which requires the implementation of technological solutions of excellence at all stages of the production process.

The result is the technology developed for the establishment and cultivation of walnut trees, which is characterized by high yields and fruit quality, rapid return on investment, very good profitability and environmental friendliness (Gandev et al., 2014). The technology is in line with the modern methods and ways of growing walnut trees, but at the same time it is adapted to the specific soil and climatic conditions of the country. The walnut production model was created and experimented in the period 2003-2013 in the experimental site of the Fruit-Growing Institute in Plovdiv. The purpose of developing the model was to provide more information to professionals and farmers on the establishment and modern ways of walnut growing, as well as to help walnut producers in planning the necessary materials, labor and resources.

(Gandev at al., 2014).

2003-2013

The most important agrotechnical measures, as well as the appropriate terms and ways of their implementation are treated. When developing the model, the research team followed the latest scientific achievements and the experience gained at home and abroad.

However, the improvement of walnut production and its intensification are continuous processes, which need acquiring new knowledge about the crop and the technical and technological advances. In that sense, one of the current tasks the Bulgarian researchers face, is the improvement of planning and management of the irrigation process.

For solving that task, it is important to identify the water needs of walnut trees through the different phenological stages and depending on the tree age and to adapt the microirrigation systems under the specific soil and climatic conditions of Bulgaria. The scarcity of such information is particularly needed during the juvenile period of the plantations.

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