

## **Alfalfa varieties for the irrigated areas of the Ebro Valley (Spain).**

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The Ebro Valley in Spain is one of the main alfalfa production areas of Southern Europe with about 150.000 ha.

In Spain, the traditional variety Aragon and its derivatives (fall dormancy rate 7-8) are sown in more than 90 % of the country, with 6 to 7 harvest per year. However, in the variety trials run in the irrigated areas of the Ebro Valley between 1990 and 2000, Aragon was very seldom in the best places. However its derivatives such as Baraka, Capitana and Victoria run among the best. Meanwhile, because of the development of the alfalfa dehydration industry in Southern Europe, varieties coming from the USA started being introduced.

In this paper we present the results of our last variety trial conducted between 2005 and 2009, in flooded irrigated conditions. In this trial, several of the main seed production companies were asked to present two of the more appropriate varieties for the area.

After four years, two of them with some water limitations, the results shown no significant differences between most of the varieties compared. However two varieties of USA origin such as PR57Q53 and Supreme, with 52.13 Mg of dry matter (MS)/ha and 49.32 Mg MS/ha (total the last 3-year production), respectively, were as good or better than Victoria and Capitana with 50.73 Mg MS/ha. Although the improvement of alfalfa varieties is a slow process and alfalfa variety trials are expensive and time consuming, alfalfa trials should be conducted regularly to be aware of the new vegetable material and of their main features.