

## OUR NEWS :

Hello everyone, here is newsletter N°10 for April and May 2011

This month we meet garlic, asparagus and old variety tomato producers, who will share their passion for their production with us.

High temperatures this spring have greatly affected the crops, everything is growing very thick and fast, in advance by about two weeks.

It is you, the professionals of fruit and vegetables who by your positive action will enable our producers to harvest and to move on these peaks in production.



Enjoy your reading .....  
talk to you again soon,  
best regards Jean-Luc



## PRODUCTION PLANNING :

Products	April/May	Products	April/May
White/purple asparagus	15 t	Late variety winter leek	25 t
Asparagus du Blayais in Conversion	10 t	New Leek (under cover)	15 t
<b>Salads</b>		<b>Potatoes</b>	
Round lettuce, oak leaf, Batavia, Little gems and Cos	200 à 300 palets	Potaotes Primeur Anaïs, Charlotte, Noisette	20 t
Fresh garlic	5 t	Early round tomatoes	10 t
Bunches of beetroot	5 000 bunches	Early Beef tomatoes	10 t
Oyster mushrooms	1 t	Early cherries (under cover) in Conversion	1,5 t
Courgette	25 t	Garriguette and Ciflorette strawberries	15 t
Stick celery	5 t	Charlotte Strawberries	5 t
Broad beans	5 t	Marrat forest Strawberries	5 t
Bunches of small white onions	50 000 bunches	Round Strawberries	20 t
Flat parsley	15 000 bunches	Kiwi fruit	100 t



## THE PRODUCERS :



### Arnaud Lot et Garonne

I was trained as a sports and physical education teacher and went into organic farming in 2002, encouraged by friends already established in organic, with whom I worked and learned the trade. So I set up on 31/2 hectares, and created an asparagus plantation on one hectare.

First of all I planted the crowns, then did some hoeing and soil maintenance for the first two springs in 2002 and 2003, to have a first harvest in 2004. The asparagus are earthed-up from 10th February to the beginning of March, and then I put a clear white plastic over them to heat up the soil and to

bring on the turions, however this does also bring on the weeds! If the season gets off to a late start, we have to take off the plastic and weed by hand.

When the harvest period is well under way and the temperatures allow it, we replace the white plastic with black. This gives us asparagus that doesn't see the daylight, and because photosynthesis doesn't occur they stay white. Purple or green asparagus are those which have been exposed to the light.

Each crop requires removing the plastic and then putting it back, which is done with a machine which lifts the plastic allowing us to lift the asparagus and then the plastic is put back behind us. Each day, I lift the crop from half the plantation, which allows me to gather about 75kg in the morning. They must then be washed in cold water, calibrated and packaged to put into refrigerators or to send to Biogaronne. For the last two years, I have diversified my production with green haricot beans in the summer and Chinese cabbage in the autumn.

I have known Biogaronne since its creation and I appreciate the fact that I can deliver all my produce to them. The lack of available irrigated land in my area prevents me from expanding my production, which I regret as I am passionate about it.

I must therefore continue teaching sport in schools and colleges to complement my farming income. If I don't find new land in order to renew my asparagus plantation in the next two years I shall be forced to give up organic farming.

### Monique Gers

I have been producing organical-since 2001, on a surface of some 50 hectares, main-cereals : wheat, spelt, sunflower, linen, soya, and hectares dedicated to garlic. I also have four buildings for poultry reared fro Label Rouge as well as one building for capons for Label Rouge.

Regarding the cultivation of garlic: sowing takes place in November, from little bulbs I buy from seed manufacturers. The upkeep of this production requires us to pass the currycomb harrow several times to weed, and it is important to choose the right times to do this. Sometimes the weeding done manually.

Garlic requires a lot of manual labour, which is why I employ four seasonal workers for the whole period of cultivation and sending to market.

The first part of the harvest is done manually from the end of May to sell this garlic fresh.

The second part is lifted by machine, the tops of the garlic are cut off and the garlic is stored and put to dry on ventilated



bedstraw. Dried garlic will be marketed from 20th July after a month of drying.

In each case, we must take each head and peel it by hand, calibrate and then package it. This year I am also going to prepare strings of garlic.

I have been working with Biogaronne since 2007 and I am very satisfied. There is recognition for work well done, regular support, a relationship of trust and I prefer to work with a network which shares my priorities, rather than a huge co-operative. This personal business also enables me to get a good price for my produce.

### Jean Luc et Philippe Charente Maritime

Our father was an oyster farmer in the winter and then market gardener in the summer and autumn on 3 hectares, organic since 1965, producing to sell at the markets.

In 1989, after training in horticulture, at the age of 23, I went into partnership with my father. We then bought 2 hectares of land, started by putting up greenhouses, sourcing our different sales outlets in La Rochelle and we transported some to organic wholesalers in Rungis.

In 1994, my brother Jean Luc came into partnership with us, from year to year our potential production is developing and we now have 10,000 m<sup>2</sup> of greenhouses on 6 hectares of land. The Company is made up now of two partners, 6 permanent staff and 3 seasonal staff during the summer.

I work on production, my brother Jean Luc takes care of supplying to customers outside our region in order to expand our range, as well as preparing the markets and the retail/wholesale markets. In 2009 we put up our most recent greenhouse of 2600m<sup>2</sup> with double inflatable walls, heated with wood granules, an ecological choice which enables us to develop early aubergines, tomatoes and strawberries in response to consumer demand.

This is the first biomass-heated greenhouse in the region. The granules come from waste from the sawmill, which is compacted. The cost of the granules is 0.18cents/kg, we need 2.5kg of granules to give the same amount of energy as 1 litre of oil, at 0.45 cents per litre but now that the price per litre is closer to 0.80 cents we are making significant savings.



We sell most of our produce through about 15 retail outlets, as well as through our farm shop. I think we've now reached the limit in volume of our sales through our markets, the growth seems to have stagnated.

We produce parsnips and Jerusalem artichokes which go to Biogaronne in the winter, round and beef tomatoes from the end of April until June, and then Cornue des Andes tomato variety for the autumn. This planning enables me to organize my rotations, and also to have guaranteed volume sales.

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