



# expoSE Karlsruhe Rheinstetten

## 23 - 24 November 2022



**Asparagus  
in the UK**

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in the UK**



**International Asparagus Meeting 2022**

UK asparagus area in production: 2,200 ha  
New plantings significantly lower for the last 2 years

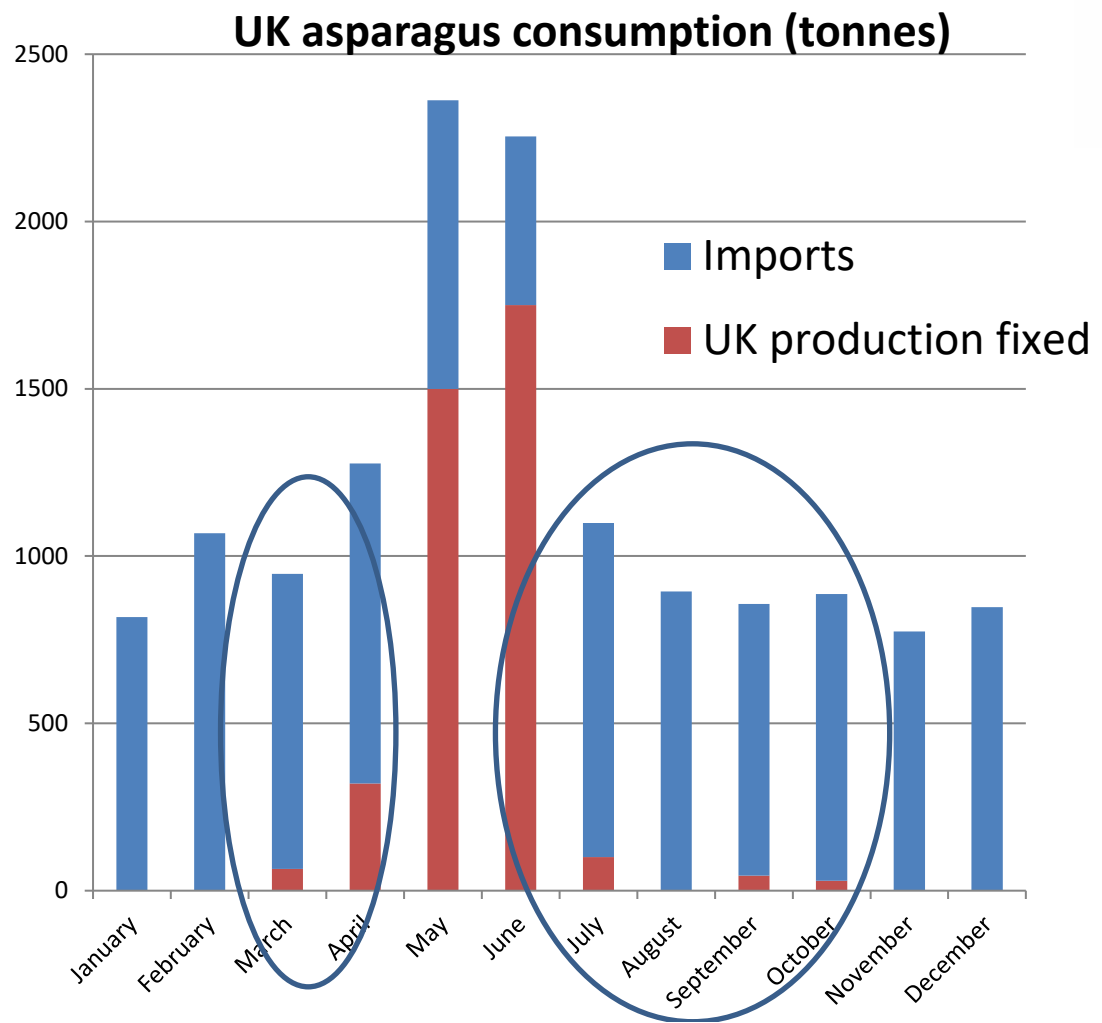
We believe just 54 asparagus growers left in the UK now compared with 120 ten years ago. Average asparagus area per farm is 40 ha but the largest 6 growers farm 1,900 ha of asparagus so the other 48 growers average just 6 ha each.

Average yield in the UK is 2.4 tonnes per ha producing 5,300 tonnes annually which is virtually all green with just 25 tonnes (0.5%) white and 75 tonnes (1.5%) purple.

The traditional UK harvest season is St George's Day (23 April) until mid-summer's day (24 June). Asparagus sales more than double during this season but imports continue all year predominantly from Peru and Mexico.

Asparagus is sold all year round by all supermarkets in the UK but reconciling Asparagus Growers' Association data with EPOS data with UK import statistics suggests that 50% of sales in the UK are through supermarkets, the rest through food service and small shops.

# UK asparagus production statistics





## Use of foil

Of the 2,200 ha of green asparagus grown in the UK some 28 ha (1.3%) is grown in high polytunnels and 450 ha (20%) in mini-tunnels

Although the arrival of the first British asparagus is still celebrated every year, the supermarkets are increasingly resistant to paying a premium price for early or late UK asparagus, preferring to sell imported product from Peru or Mexico at a lower price.

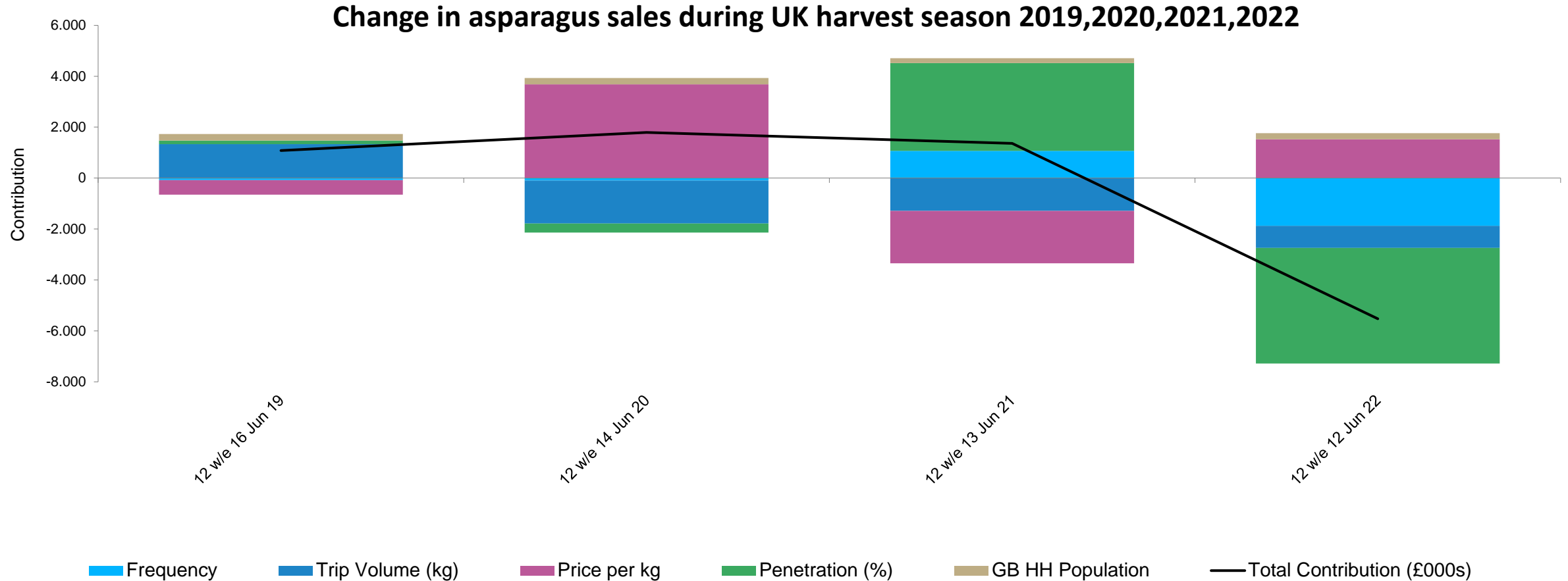


**February sunshine on mini-tunnels**



**Harvesting reverse season green asparagus in a polytunnel in September**

# Following a strong season in 2021 the Asparagus market struggled to hold on to shoppers in 2022.





# Sales of premium packs are in decline

# With a movement to large naked bundle packs





Since Brexit all Seasonal Agricultural Workers (SAWS) who do not have pre-settled status must have a VISA to work in the UK. UK minimum wage in 2022 is £9.50 per hour but by law we must pay £10.10 per hour for SAWS workers. For 2023 the minimum wage will be £10.42 per hour but for SAWS workers the rate will be more than £11 per hour giving us an employment cost of at least £13.50 (€15.50) per hour. In addition we must guarantee a minimum of 30 hours work every week.

We now recruit from further away from the UK: Ukraine, Nepal, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan. Despite problems due to Covid and the war in Ukraine, we have just about managed to recruit enough people, although delays by the UK in issuing VISAs have caused some serious shortages.

**We are working with Muddy Machines developing a robotic harvester, here being demonstrated to UK growers, June 2022**



**Cobrey Farm's harvest worker accommodation, temporary home for circa 1,000 people**





# Pests & Diseases

**Fern:**  
Asparagus beetle



Thrips: high polytunnel only



Fortunately no asparagus fly in the UK – yet!

Stemphylium



Rust usually only in polytunnels



**Roots & crown:**

Fusarium



Phytophthora



# A seven year trial looking at aspects of green asparagus cultivation:

Annual re-ridging significantly reduces yields (root damage?)

Annual application of PAS 100 compost increases yields by 30%

Companion cropping with rye significantly reduces yield if no cultivation (allelopathic effect?)

