

The tastiest tomato

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Both professional vegetable growers and amateur gardeners are being sought to participate in the breeding process for the creation of a new tomato variety. The Plovdiv Vegetable Crops Research Institute VCRI “Maritsa” is a partner in this international project and is recruiting volunteers to take part in the cultivation of a new variety of this vegetable that is typical for our table – the tomato.

The Harnesstom project, dedicated to so-called “participatory breeding” and “citizen science”, offers in 2022 for farmers to become breeders, and for amateur gardeners – scientists. The aim of the experiment is to attract more people to scientific activities related to the creation of a new agricultural crop variety and to increase consumers’ awareness of the way food is produced and its quality. Not least is the main task of the experiment, namely for scientists to select the most delicious tomatoes with the help of public opinion. Over the next few

years, various activities will be organized, during which seeds and seedlings of selected tomato varieties will be tested by vegetable producers, culinary professionals and citizens.

The Harnesstom initiative is being implemented simultaneously in Spain, Italy and Bulgaria. The Plovdiv Vegetable Crops Research Institute VCRI “Maritsa” is a partner in this international project and is recruiting volunteers to participate in the cultivation of this vegetable that is typical for our table – the tomato.

After an online survey on preferences for the “ideal” tomato is conducted, each participant in the experiment will have the opportunity to receive several pre-selected tomato varieties from the institute, to grow them in their own garden or on a balcony in urban conditions, and then to describe which variety they prefer and why.

New Bulgarian tomato variety

In the Harnesstom project, based on information obtained from previous European projects, 241 tomato varieties possessing a complex of valuable traits have been selected. This set of varieties encompasses to the greatest extent possible the biodiversity in cultivated tomatoes and may be of interest to producers, culinary professionals and consumers. Out of a total of 241, 25 varieties have been selected to be included in the Participatory Breeding and Citizen Science experiments. The Bulgarian tomato varieties included in this selection are Anaranjado – intended for fresh consumption, Rozovo Sărtse (Pink Heart) – fresh consumption, Pautalia – processing, and Alya – cherry type.

If you are interested in participating, in growing tomato plants and recording your own data on the characteristics of the plants and fruits, you may apply for participation at <http://harnesstom.eu/en/citizen-science-home/citizen-science-bulgarian/experiment.html>.