

Demonstration of the WeLASER system in The Netherlands

Field day

On August 24 to 26, 2023, the third WeLASER Field Day was organized by VDBP within the PRECISION FARMING DAYS (Reusel, The Netherlands), an event where precision machines, sensors, robots, software, and drones for agriculture are exhibited for farmers, professionals, students, and curious people. Over 50 suppliers offered their solutions in booths and fields and gave more than 20 demonstrations to over 650 visitors. WeLASER consortium used this event to communicate and disseminate the project results.

Program

The event program was based on talks in the conference tent, field demonstrations, and direct assistance to interested people in the booths. CSIC, LZH, and UNIBO gave talks on the WeLASER project in the mornings and the afternoons, followed by demonstrations in a 37x15-m² field with maize plants provided by VDBP. In addition, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., CSIC, LZH, FUT, UNIBO, IETU, and UGENT partners served the visitors in the WeLASER booth.



Conclusions

WELASER partners received valuable feedback from competitors and stakeholders, revealing a growing interest in adopting laser-based weeding as an alternative to herbicide applications. The event yielded notable conclusions:

- Farmers recognize the potential benefits of robotics; however, the transition is not their top priority now.
- The expected working capacity of the WeLASER system was mainly considered one economic factor discussed among labor costs for manual weeding and investment for the device.
- Competitive factors should be reviewed with a holistic approach to assess process competitiveness, which goes beyond mere cost comparisons and should include factors such as environmental impact, crop health, and regulatory compliance.

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