

*Citrus Industry Magazine- UF/IFAS SWFREC Citrus Mechanical Harvesting Program  
“What’s Shakin” column*

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Spain accounts for more than 55% of European citrus production and is an important producer of fresh market oranges, mandarins and lemons. Harvesting accounts for more than 50% of production costs and Spanish growers are becoming increasingly interested in mass harvesting systems in conjunction with abscission agents, which decrease fruit detachment force of mature fruits and improve efficiency of machine performance. Spanish citrus growers, however, are concerned to what extent abscission compounds blemish the fruit’s exterior rind and thus renders the fruit unmarketable for fresh fruit consumption. Spanish researchers are studying whether the application of etephon improves mechanical harvesting of mandarines and to what extent fruit quality and tree physiology is affected by etephon. Results from a 3-year study showed that mechanical harvest did not affect fruit production in the following year with or without the use of etephon.