

## **EU fresh fruit & vegetable sector urgently requires additional financial assistance to avoid food supply crisis**

Despite providing an uninterrupted supply of fresh fruit and vegetables so far to European citizens confined at home, the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to destabilize the European fresh fruit and vegetable sector, threatening long-term food supply. In a letter sent today to European Commissioner for Agriculture Janusz Wojciechowski Freshfel Europe has requested urgent financial assistance and flexibility in CAP tools to provide much needed stability to the fresh fruit and vegetable sector. Currently, growers are grappling with significant cost increases estimated to be at least €500 million per month. The sector has also lost access to the food service sector representing 25-30% of the market supply and EU fresh fruit and vegetables exports to third countries worth €5 billion per year are also confronted with significant difficulties. As the pandemic evolves, it will continue to bring with it further economic stress for the sector and threaten the financial sustainability of fresh fruit and vegetable supply.

Freshfel Europe's letter to European Commissioner Wojciechowski warns that the European fresh fruit and vegetable sector cannot sustain the increased level of production and logistic costs resulting from the COVID-19 crisis without endangering fresh fruit and vegetable supply in the long term. Financial support is essential in conjunction with other measures, such as flexibility in management of CAP tools, to allow the sector to continue balancing additional costs related to COVID-19 with economic sustainability.

Remarking on the huge financial burden being carried by the sector, Freshfel Europe General Delegate affirmed that, "Added costs in orchards and packing houses are estimated at least €0,05 cts/kg and a similar amount of €0,05 cts/kg is also to be considered to be added as extra charge in intra EU transport". Collectively this represents about €500 million given the volume produced and shipped monthly. Mr. Binard also highlighted that the sector should be considered an essential sector to secure access to protective tools and measures



that would enable the return to normal operating conditions as early as possible. This would include access to hydrogel, masks and testing and allow the sector to be in a position to remove social distancing measures. With the availability of all seasonal workers this would these changes would facilitate orchard activities and logistics operations to run at normal high efficiency rates to ensure supply.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to unfold Freshfel Europe maintains that further necessary measures under the CAP must be taken at European level to avoid a food supply crisis later in the year and secure that the sector can continue to provide Europe's supply of fresh fruit and vegetables at affordable prices to consumers in the coming months. Freshfel Europe has also recommended to Commissioner Wojciechowski that in light of the far reaching implications of the COVID-19 crisis to also review different policies connected to agriculture and fruit and vegetables specifically, such as research and innovation, organic reform, promotion policy, international trade policy and the forthcoming Farm to Fork Strategy. Evolving conditions in regard to insurance and credit insurance and equal access to liquidity should also be analyzed.

Lien article :

<https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9209771/eu-fresh-fruit-vegetable-sector-urgently-requires-additional-financial-assistance-to-avoid-food-supply-crisis/>

